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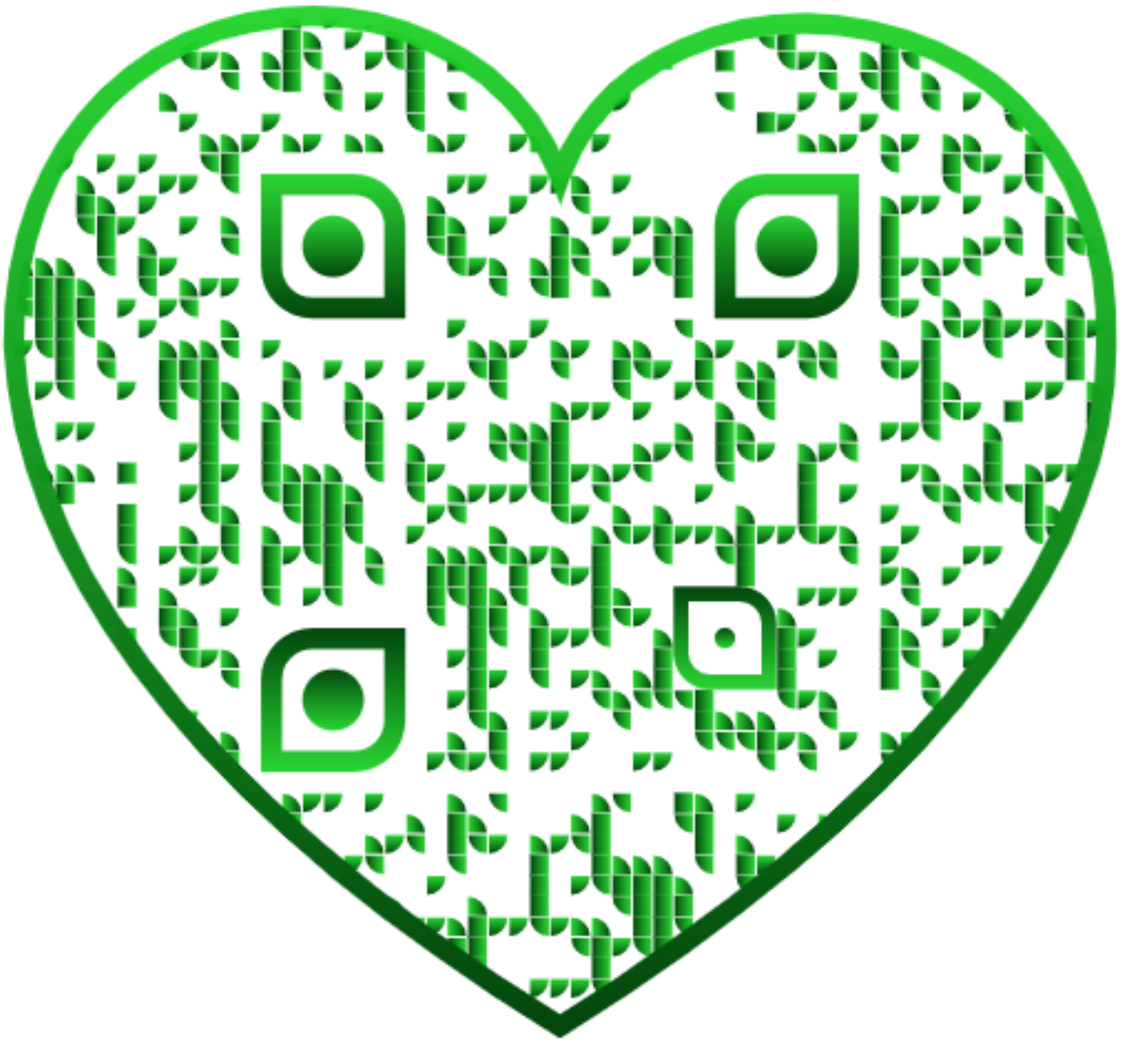

Ask a dozen different people what Marillion mean to them, and you'll get a dozen different answers. For some, they're the freaks in the facepaint who picked up where vintage Genesis left off, keeping the prog flag flying through the early 80s wilderness years. For others, they're that band who had a massive pop hit with *Kayleigh*, fronted by the big Scotsman who liked a bevy or two. To some, they're a band whose second act – as a grown-up, intelligent, criminally under-appreciated rock group – overshadows everything they achieved in their original incarnation. And then there are those who would have it that they're the ones who helped save the music industry via their groundbreaking and much-copied crowdfunding model. The thing is, Marillion are all of these things and more. Few bands have had such a brilliant, fascinating, often turbulent career. And fewer still have ended up, nearly 40 years down the line, in the position they occupy – a hugely successful self-contained entity with a die-hard fanbase, whose future is just as bright as their past.

That's precisely what we're here to celebrate. In this blockbusting one-off Marillion special, we've brought together articles drawn from the archives of *Prog* and *Classic Rock* magazines, alongside brand new interviews and a rundown of the 50 greatest Marillion songs as voted for by the people who matter – their fans. And what better way of celebrating a band with two such distinct and different eras than giving you two separate covers for the price of one –one to mark their original, Fish-fronted incarnation, the other to salute their current, long-time line-up featuring Steve Hogarth. From classic albums to the stories behind their iconic artwork, it's all in here.

Enjoy…

Dave Everley - Editor

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ALAMY

MARK WILKINSON/LEAD: PRESS

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It's been more than 40 years since Marillion formed in Aylesbury and they've since gone on to become one of the important modern British progressive bands. *Prog* talks to them about their formation, chart successes, and how they were propelled from a home-counties pub band to headliners at Hammersmith Odeon within the space of a few years.

Words: Jerry Ewing **Portrait:** Shutterstock

The Jester's Tour

"Suddenly we went from being some home-county area band to having an audience all over the country."

Mark Kelly

We know the script by now. It's the late 70s. Progressive rock has had its day in the sun, and now its bloated carcass lies dying in the street, kicked into the gutter by the nascent fury of thousands of punk rockers. In a few short years it has risen majestically, daring to challenge perceived convention, ripped up the rule book and owned arenas around the world. But it has become the victim of its own success; a cumbersome beast in thrall to its own peccadilloes. And then along came punk rock…

Except no one thought to tell Marillion!

In truth, punk rock was already almost an afterthought when a young Buckinghamshire drummer by the name of Mick Pointer, with a head full of rock-star dreams, was looking for a band to join. If you believed the media, the music that inspired him – such as Camel, Deep Purple, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Genesis – was also an afterthought.

"I thought there's got to be other people that are into this style of stuff," Pointer recalls today. "Honestly, it was simplistic, but that's actually what I thought. And I thought: 'Not everybody has got a fucking spiky haircut now.'"

But soon Pointer found some likeminded musicians without spiky haircuts, and joined Electric Gypsy, who also included future Solstice guitarist Andy Glass and a bassist by the name of Doug Irvine.

"It was a 60s/70s mid-rock sort of thing," Pointer remembers. "There wasn't any particular route anybody was going down. I don't think we had any particularly big ambitions to make too much of it. We were pretty young – just get in a room and start playing. It was pretty ad-hoc, to be honest with you."

Lurking beneath the surface, however, was a determination that would become a staple for where things would move next. Frustrated by a lack of ambition in the band, Pointer and Irvine decided to move on.

Punk tried to kill prog, but Marillion were having none of it.

"I got along particularly well with Doug," Pointer says. "As usual with most of these things, everything was done down at the pub. We spent all the time together just mapping out where we'd like to go, like everybody does when they're young. So me and him said let's form our own band, and put our own guys together that would suit what we're attempting and trying to do."

And in one fell swoop, Marillion were born. Except they weren't called Marillion back then. Inspired by a Tolkien book that Irvine had, the new outfit called themselves Silmarillion. The early line-up was Irvine (bass) and Pointer (drums), keyboard player Neil Cockle and guitarist Martin Jenner. Camel, with whom Irvine and Pointer shared a mutual love, became their main reference point.

"We used to rehearse in the Princes Risborough area," Pointer recalls. "We had this rehearsal room, and in the other room happened to be…"

> "There were parts of that original Silmarillion set that actually found its way onto *Script For A Jester's Tear*."
>
> **Mick Pointer**

You guessed it…

"…Camel! They would come in and watch us. Very fleetingly, but it was a bit of a moment for us. We wrote all our own material. Me and Doug had a lot of our own material we were working on and it was all instrumental."

This line-up only played one gig, at Southall's Hanborough Tavern, at the tail-end of 1978. The band then split following a row over equipment, leaving a core of Pointer and Irvine.

"Doug said, okay, let's find two other people we need. We put an advert in [weekly paper] *Musicians Only*."

First to answer the call was a young guitarist from Whitby called Steve Rothery. Legend suggests he arrived unannounced with guitar in hand, although in truth today no one can really remember.

"I came down and auditioned in the late spring of '79," Rothery does remember. "A band called Silmarillion, who had only ever done one gig, and it was really just a bass player with a drummer. I came down and got chosen for the guitarist. I gave up my job and moved down and lived in this little tiny cottage."

Rothery had set his heart on playing guitar in a band, but when his own local band had all set off for college he set his sights further afield.

"I've got a funny feeling that he practically moved in from that day," Pointer laughs. "I was practically living there myself as well. Then we were still Silmarillion."

Local keyboard player Brian Jelliman completed up the Silmarillion line-up, but before the band had even played their first gig (which would be at Berkhamsted Civic Centre, attended by a very fresh-faced Steven Wilson) there was one major change.

"During that time I suggested to Doug that while people left, we should lob off letters of the name – jokingly, down at the pub," Pointer laughs. "But 'Ilmarillion' didn't sort of work. So we got rid of the S, I, and L. That's how we ended up with Marillion."

"There's a bunch of stories about why that came about," Fish will chuckle later on. "I heard that when they were called Silmarillion they were too lazy to change the stencil. They just blacked out the 'Sil'."

And so, in 1979, 40 years ago, Marillion were born. Although less than a year in there would be yet another line-up change.

"Doug left when he reached the ripe old age of 25," says Rothery. "He decided he hadn't made it. He was going to knock it on the head. It was probably less than a year. We had done maybe about five shows, just weird and wonderful things: we played at a hospital; we played a street carnival on the back of a trailer in Watford, supporting Garston Magicians. So we weren't setting the world on fire. We did a gig at a High Wycombe student bar. That was probably one of the better ones we did. It was my dream, and we probably weren't thinking too far ahead."

At this stage the band's repertoire was slowly taking shape. Certain sections of early material like *Herne The Hunter*, *The Haunting Of Gill House* and *Alice* would later be adapted into some of Marillion's better-known early songs. The band recorded two demos in March and the summer of 1980. The first featured the aforementioned songs alongside *Scott's Porridge*, the second featured another version of *Alice*, along with *Lady Fantasy* and *Close*, parts of which would later resurface in *He Knows You Know*, *The Web* and *Chelsea Monday*.

STEVE ROTHERY/ TAKEN FROM HIS BOOK *POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD*/WWW.MARILLION.COM/SHOP/MERCH/POSTCARDSFROMTHEROAD.HTM

The very first Marillion line-up, L-R: Brian Jelliman, Mick Pointer, Doug Irvine, Steve Rothery, unknown.

"There were parts of that original Silmarillion set that actually found their way on to [debut album] *Script For A Jester's Tear*," says Pointer. "Some of the *Grendel* stuff certainly was kicking around at that point. And certainly some of *The Web* was kicking around that, certain parts of *Garden Party*. When we became Marillion, Doug took over the vocal parts. He was starting to add lyrics."

Still, without their bass player and sometime vocalist, the band needed to kick on if they were to maintain their momentum. It was back to *Musician's Only* and another add. Although this was only for a new vocalist/bass player.

"Because we were quite entrenched in the Camel sort of way, I couldn't see us with a frontman," admits Pointer.

Fate, however, was to see things differently. Former student and forestry worker Derek William Dick, the man who would be known as Fish, was another young man with rock-star dreams.

"I was two years into a three-year course for forestry," he says, "and I jacked it and decided to be a singer."

His early forays into music had seen Fish ply his youthful trade with Stoned Dome Band, where he'd met bass player William 'Diz' Minnitt. The pair had struck up a friendship which had seen them relocate to Cambridge, where Fish's then-girlfriend was studying, when the rest of Stoned Dome Band's lack of ambition became apparent. When money ran out they returned to the Scottish borders, intent on starting a new band. While there they saw an ad from a band in Aylesbury looking for a singer/bassist in *Musician's Only*.

"We wrote to them saying we were a singer *and* bassist," says Fish. "They wrote back and sent a tape up. It was largely instrumental, very few lyrics. So we did stereo recordings and put on one track on the stereo recorder, and I sang on the other. I did some Genesis songs, some Yes songs. Basically copied other people's vocals."

"I remember the tape turning up," recalls Pointer. "Back then you could use a cassette tape, and put a piece of music on one track of the stereo, and then on the other he would be singing along. One of the ones that stood out to me was the Genesis stuff he was singing along to."

"My last 10 pence went in a phone box in Ettrickbridge, which was the phone call I made," Fish laughs. "It was like, okay, we're going for it. And we basically loaded everything up in the blue combi van and Diz drove down to Aylesbury. We were going there and fuck it; we're loading everything up and putting everything in that basket. They met us in a pub

and we got on okay, and it started to move on from there."

"He and Diz basically said, 'Yeah, okay, let's go for it'," says Pointer. "So that was the nucleus, I suppose, of the Marillion that most people initially are aware of."

The new five-piece line-up of Marillion wasted no time in getting down to business, and kicked off an intense 10-week rehearsal at Leyland Farm Studios in Buckinghamshire before playing their debut gig, at Bicester's Red Lion Pub on March 14, 1981, in front of an audience of 65. In July, with four months of serious gigging under their belt, they entered Roxon Studios in Oxfordshire, with local musician Les Payne producing, where they recorded a new demo featuring the more recognisably titled *He Knows You Know*, *Garden Party* and *Charting The Single*, which they'd sell at gigs for the princely sum of £1.25.

Yet despite making considerable headway throughout most of 1981, towards the end of the year change was afoot.

"The thing was that Steve had come down from Yorkshire and joined the band," Fish explains. "I'd come down from Scotland. So our dedication levels were a little bit higher. It was like, don't fuck about. For me, I was going to make this fucking work."

"I was very ambitious," adds Pointer. "My ambition was also matched by Derek's ambition as well. Me and him would plot and plan as much as we possibly could. You've got to keep pushing and moving forward."

It was keyboard player Brian Jelliman who was the focus of the discontent.

"I think there was a personality clash with him and Derek," Pointer muses. "And also the route we were taking was going a little bit further away from where he was at."

"Brian didn't seem committed," Fish concurs. "I didn't think he was a particularly good keyboard player."

STEVE ROTHERY/ TAKEN FROM HIS BOOK *POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD*/WWW.MARILLION.COM/SHOP/MERCH/POSTCARDSFROMTHEROAD.HTM

Which one's Steven Wilson? Above: Marilion's first gig at Berkhamsted Civic Centre, March 1, 1980. Left: The Roxon demo..

The situation was heightened when Marillion were supported by a young Essex prog band called Chemical Alice. Both Fish and Pointer were impressed by their keyboard player, Mark Kelly.

TAPE: COURTESY OF MARILLION SETLISTS SITE 1980-1988 - ANDRE KREUTZMANN

Electric Gypsy circa '78/'79, L-R: Doug Irvine, Alan King, Mick Pointer, Andy Glass.

LEFT: SUPPLIED BY MARK WILKINSON

Mick Pointer: "There was this guy in this band who was basically throwing his keyboards around. At that point, it seemed really exciting, because Brian was really static."

Fish: "I remember Mick Pointer and I were standing at the bar. It was kind of like: 'That's a great keyboard player.' Then we made the approach."

Mark Kelly remembers being approached by the tall Scotsman and the Marillion drummer. But at that point he had only seen them play a few songs, so the following week he made his way across London to see Marillion play Chesham's Elgiva Hall in November 1981.

"Brian spotted me and recognised me from the previous week," he reveals. "He asked Fish: 'What's he doing here?' I went back to Fish's house, and the next morning they went round and told Brian that he was fired – after I said that I would join."

Replacing Brian Jelliman with Mark Kelly could be seen as ruthless subterfuge; or the product of the strength of determination to succeed that existed within many of the band members. Either way, the band were building up a serious head of steam, even if they remained below the radar of the mainstream media. Although that was probably a good thing for a band steadfastly creating progressive rock at a time when new

wave was beginning to morph into New Romantic as the media's then-darlings.

As Marillion's line-up transmogrified into the one most fans readily associate with the early years, so the band were fine-tuning other areas of their organisation, which helped set them apart from their peers. The first issue of *The Web*, the band's newsletter (an early inspiration for this writer) appeared in February 1982, pulling their fan base into an increasingly tight network. They were already a hard-working road band, and their own music was developing apace, even if every record label who'd been sent the Roxon demo had passed on them.

"You didn't care to conform to the normal structure," offers Rothery today, of the band's developing sound, which was deeply rooted in the progressive rock favoured by all five bandmembers. "All the music you loved didn't do that anyway. So you'd just have that freedom. What comes across when I listen to the early stuff, it's very unselfconscious. It's very natural for young musicians who'd grown up listening to a certain kind of music to then want to do that – to emulate their heroes and take that ethos or that approach. I think that definitely shines through, especially with the early stuff."

"If you wanted to put the big Venn diagram together," Fish adds, of those heroes the band were happy to emulate, "you had Pointer who was into Rush, that was his main thing. He wanted to be Neal Peart. And he was into Yes, Genesis. Then you had Mark Kelly, who was more a Yes-type person. But again, he liked Genesis. And Steve was more Camel, but liked Hackett and Genesis. So when you put the Venn diagram together, the one influence who was there between all the members of the band was Genesis. That was where it fell."

> "The thing was that Steve had come down from Yorkshire and joined the band. I'd come down from Scotland. So our dedication levels were a little bit higher. It was like, don't fuck about."
>
> **Fish**

It was on the road that the music was given the space to breathe. Their first show with new keyboard player Mark Kelly was at the Great Northern in Cambridge on December 1, 1981. It included five of the six songs that would appear on the band's debut album, plus *Charting The Single*, the epic *Grendel* and the carousing live favourite *Margaret*, named after the band's trusty touring van.

"From when I joined, at the end of '81, early '82, the band really went from being a pub band to regular sell-out shows at the Marquee," adds Kelly. "And then we did the Reading Festival in 1982. We weren't very high up on the bill, but we were on the festival."

It wasn't just the music and the road work. With such an imposing frontman as Fish, Marillion were slowly carving out a reputation as a band you needed to take notice of. At almost six-feet-five he struck a dominant figure, whose choice of face paint, initially to mask his own on-stage insecurities, helped make Marillion stand out yet further, and the band opted for stage effects and early costumes to strengthen their identity.

"You had a six-foot-five singer, and I painted my face because I was shy," explains Fish. "It was a mask that I put on that enabled me to go in front of an audience. And then it became a calling card. I ended up using Leichner. Before I'd discovered the Leichner grease paints – which I got from a kids' party joke shop thing in Aylesbury Market in Friars Square – I used all sorts of shit. Including nail varnish!

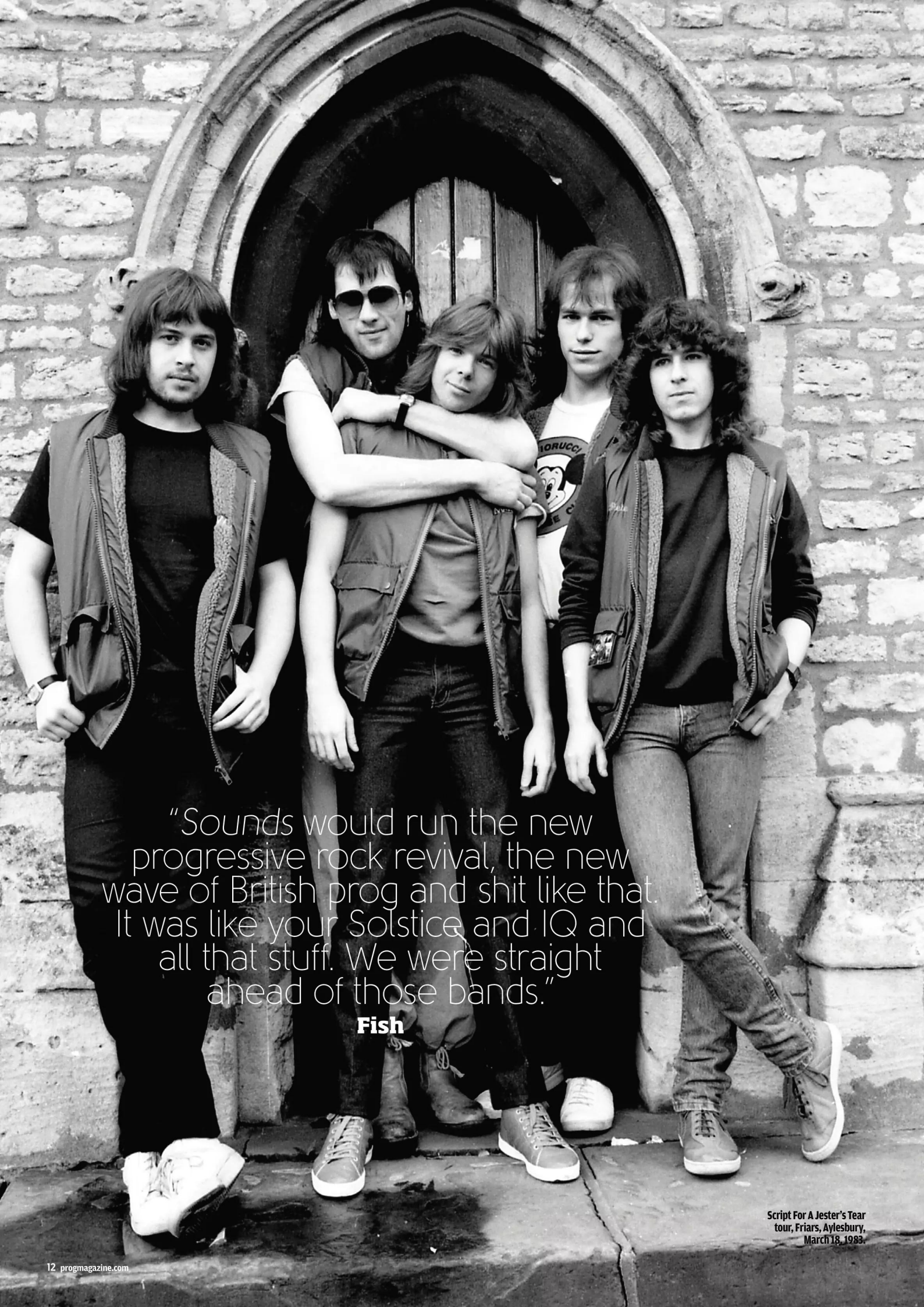
"We'd gone Hammer Horror too! Hammer Films at the time had a big sale. We went up to the auction and bought all the crosses and stuff and wreaths and shit like that. We were going into pubs and people remembered us. I would know the whole set. On the night of the performance, we wanted to get as many people to like Marillion. We had *The Web* newsletter. It was all organised by Steph Jeffrey, Mick's partner. She was the fan club secretary. There was definitely a plan."

"I remember one of my first gigs with the band," Rothery chuckles. "Privet [Christopher Hedge], who became our sound engineer, was doing pyrotechnics for us at that time. And one of the flash bombs didn't go off, so he had the great idea of scraping it into another pot and setting off two simultaneously. So this sheet of flame goes up my back. It could have been a very short career."

An even bigger step was when the band finally got the nod from the BBC to record a session for *The Friday Rock Show*, which at the time was about the only outlet for rock music on national radio and television. It was recorded with producer Tony Wilson at the BBC's Maida Vale Studios on January 29, 1982."

"The *Friday Rock Show* session was a real boost for us," states Kelly. "I think that came about because we had opened for a band called Spider. Spider's manager was a woman called Maggi Farran, and she was married to Tony Wilson, who was there at that gig and invited us to come and do some songs. That must have tripled or quadrupled our audience. Suddenly we went from being some home-county area band to having an audience all over the country."

With everything very much in the ascendency, there was still one final line-up change that would take place before the Marillion of the band's debut album was fully realised. This



"*Sounds* would run the new progressive rock revival, the new wave of British prog and shit like that. It was like your Solstice and IQ and all that stuff. We were straight ahead of those bands."

Fish

Script For A Jester's Tear tour, Friars, Aylesbury, March 18, 1983.

time the spotlight fell on Fish's pal, bassist Diz Minnitt.

"That wasn't my choice," Fish protests today. "That was provoked by the rest of the band. They were saying that Diz wasn't good enough. I was never quite sure whether it was because he was my mate or because he was a bass player. Diz was a good bass player, but he wasn't as good as Pete [Trewavas, who replaced him]."

Mark Kelly takes up the story. "I had been in the band for a few months, and I realised that Diz wasn't really up to the job. I suggested that maybe we might think about getting a new bass player. Which I thought, looking back, was a bit forward of me, because I'd only been in the band for a couple of months. But Fish agreed."

Of all the musicians in the early days of Marillion, Pete Trewavas had perhaps achieved the most. He'd learned to play guitar with longtime friend Robin Boult at the age of seven, and was already a veteran of several local Aylesbury bands including the proggy Orthi and the more new wave The Metros, with whom he'd toured America. It was with The Metros that Fish had first stumbled across the young bass player. "I was kicking about in Aylesbury in the pubs and Pete was playing in The Metros," he says. "I saw them and said, 'This guy is fucking brilliant.' I said, 'I found a bass player.'

"Pete came up and auditioned in the garage of the house. I remember that because his bass was in a case that was covered in newspapers, because the case was falling apart, so he glued newspapers on it. And he left the fucking case in the back alley. It looked like something to be taken by the dustman. But he was in. He just clicked right away. And then we had to get rid of Diz. In that traditional Marillion way, it was like, 'Who's got to do it?' 'Well, Fish here can do it.' So I had to fire my best mate before a gig."

Mark Kelly remembers things slightly differently.

"Fish insisted on telling Diz before the gig that he was fired. And I thought that was crazy. He said, 'Well, you tell him', because it was my idea to get rid of him. Fish suggested I had to do it before the gig. And I'm like, 'Do you think that's a good idea? Why don't we let him know after the gig?' And he goes, 'No, you've got to do it.' So Fish stood there while he watched me saying to Diz that he was fired. And halfway through me trying to say, 'Sorry, Diz...' Fish was like, 'You're fucking it up, let me do it.' And he just came in and told Diz that he was fired and that he was rubbish, or something like that. And of course Diz, quite understandably, went, 'Well, I'm not playing the gig' and he left."

STEVE ROTHERY/ TAKEN FROM HIS BOOK *POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD*/WWW.MARILLION.COM/SHOP/MERCH/POSTCARDSFROMTHEROAD.HTM

Train gang: Mick Pointer, Fish, Pete Trewavas and Mark Kelly on the Script tour.

Marillion played that gig, at Milton Keynes The Starting Gate, on March 26, 1982, as a four-piece, before Pete Trewavas was drafted in for the next show, at Coventry's General Wolfe Club on April 4.

"It was strange going on tour with a bunch of people you didn't know actually. That was a weird experience." says Trewavas. "It took a while to get to know anybody, really. I think I probably got to know Mark and Steve Rothery first. They were probably the easiest two people for me to get to know because we had kind of musical reference points and things in common we could talk about, I guess. I wasn't sure about Fish. Because Fish was the dynamic frontman, and probably the leader of the group at the time, really. And you know what it's like in bands. There's all sorts of characters that make up a band. But it was interesting that there was a bit of a buzz and it seemed to be getting bigger."

It was not only the buzz surrounding the *Friday Rock Show* sessions that were attracting attention for Marillion. At Fish's behest, they'd taken the unusual step of employing a press officer to help their cause with the weekly UK music press, of which *Sounds*, the most rock-friendly, was already showing an interest. And not just any PR, but the legendary Keith Goodwin, who'd previously worked with the likes of Yes, Horslips and Argent.

"I had to learn very, very fast," muses Fish. "I had a little paperback book that I bought. It was how to become a pop star. It had the basics – you need an agent, you need this. It was all real basic stuff. You need to get a press officer. And I decided that we had to get a press officer to get us noticed. I was introduced to Keith Goodwin. He had a little office on Oxford Street. I went down to meet him in June of 1981 or something. I remember it was a very, very hot day in London. I went down and played the demo, and he loved it."

It helped, of course, that Marillion weren't the only young band bringing a progressive rock sound back into vogue. Although today the band veer away from admitting there was a scene of sorts.

"We were doing something really different," Fish snorts. "The press had allegedly buried progressive rock. We'd come up underneath the fucking radar into the Marquee club. Suddenly prog was back. Of course, *Sounds* would run the new progressive rock revival, the new wave of British prog and shit like that; it was like your Solstice and IQ and all that stuff. We were straight ahead of those bands.

"The only band that we'd played with that I can remember was Pallas. We were playing up in Scotland, and as far as we knew they were big up in Scotland. So we did a joint headliner with them. We basically went and played with them to get to their audience. But we weren't phoning each other up asking what to do next. As far as that was concerned, we were Marillion and that's us. We're not part of any fucking movement, you know? We didn't want anything to do with anybody else."

By mid-1982, the momentum was definitely with Marillion. The likes of Pendragon, Twelfth Night and IQ might have all joined Marillion as being able to headline the Marquee, but Marillion were Marquee regulars. From a first headline show on January 25, they'd racked up a further 13 headline

Fish was the cover star on *Sounds* weekly music newspaper, February 19, 1983.

MARC TIELEMANS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

ANDY PHILLIPS

appearances at the celebrated London venue by the end of 1982.

"We were rolling big fucking dice," Fish states proudly. "Trying to find angles and ways in. All the contacts for all the record companies came through Keith Goodwin or came through hunting people down. Without the internet. It was all phones. It wasn't even mobiles. It was all coins and phone boxes and stuff. We were driven."

Having been rejected by all and sundry a year previously, now the record labels were paying attention.

"You know, we almost signed with BBC Records," says Pointer. "They actually had a record department. I know Charisma were interested in us as well."

"Charisma sent this guy to basically do the deal," adds Kelly. "And I don't think he got the memo, because he basically offered us a two-singles deal. We just said we weren't interested. Then EMI were hot on their heels. And then [manager] John Arnison said, 'We've got you, basically, a five-album deal.' We said that's more like it.

"I know Tony Stratton-Smith [who looked after Genesis] at Charisma was really upset, because he really wanted to sign the band. And then he said to John, 'Well, how about publishing? Can I sign the band for publishing?' And actually we ended up signing for publishing through them. He was a good guy."

"It's funny," laughs Trewavas, "because they'd say, 'Oh, you walk in and we get a record deal.' And I'd say, 'No, no, no. I walk in and I get you a record deal!' There was a bit of that banter going on. Because, of course, I hadn't really done the hard work, they'd done the hard work."

And so as the summer of 1982 drew to a close, Marillion, an unashamedly progressive rock band, the like of which the music press had claimed were no more, had a major-label deal with EMI Records.

They recorded two sets of demos for EMI in July and September, the latter seeing them hooked up with, ironically, former Genesis producer David Hitchcock. It was also Hitchcock with whom they would record their debut single, *Market Square Heroes*, at Park Gate Studios in Battle, East Sussex that September. Which is somewhat ironic, seeing as it had been decided that the B-side of the 12-inch version would be the 17-minute epic *Grendel* – a song many had quickly pointed out bore a striking resemblance to Genesis' 1972 epic *Supper's Ready*, from the album *Foxtrot*, produced by... you guessed it, David Hitchcock.

"Not that I remember," Pointer replies today when asked if Hitchcock himself picked up on the similarity between the two songs. "I think he was pretty happy to be working on another job. I think he had an extremely good career. But, like a lot of people, they'd be tarred with the progressive stuff, and then the punky stuff comes along and they don't seem to get used."

Marillion's first single was released on October 25, 1982. It captured both sides of the band's character, with the catchy, up-tempo *Market Square Heroes* and *Three Boats Down From The Candy* showing a more immediate side to the band, the lengthy take of *Grendel* a startlingly mature take on classic prog. It was housed in stunning artwork from a young artist called Mark Wilkinson, whose jester character went a long way to establishing a visual identity for Marillion, which would last for Fish's entire tenure with the band.

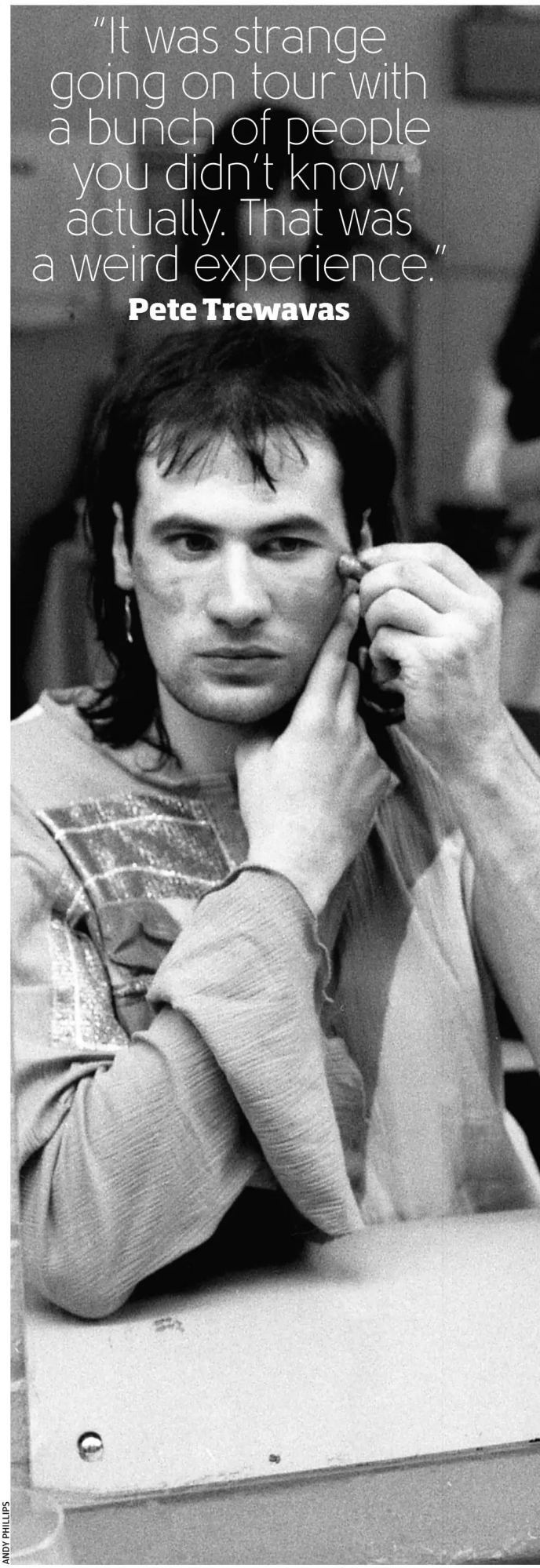
"I think Mark Wilkinson's covers in the early days helped establish a strong visualisation for the band," says Rothery. "I think that really helped. It gave us a very strong identity. All the different cards had to fall in a certain way for things to happen. You realise, when you look back at it, all things had to happen for you to achieve a certain level of success; well, even to get to release a record, never mind having any success with it."

None of the songs from that first single would appear on the band's debut album. Nor would David Hitchcock. The producer unfortunately suffered a car accident when actually delivering the master tapes of the single to EMI, which prevented him from working on it. Nick Tauber, who had previously worked with Thin Lizzy and Toyah, was brought in to produce the record, which was done at their home away from home, Marquee Studios, above the club of the same name.

"It was a great studio," states Fish. "It felt like the right move. We were in our London sanctuary. I remember when we played *Script* live on stage for the first time. Coming off stage, you go straight into the studio, which was good. It was a really good vibe.

"We were getting into all sorts of shenanigans there. I remember phoning up the secretary for the Marquee for the *He Knows You Know* thing. We did a lot of shit. We wanted a couple of Floyd-style effects. We wanted to get the announcer in for doing the spoken-word bit before *Forgotten Sons* and shit like that. It was a lot of fun building it."

Recorded between December 1982 and February 1983, debut album *Script For A Jester's Tear* was released on March 13. Two weeks later it was nestled at number seven in the UK album chart, a phenomenal result for



ANDY PHILLIPS

STEVE ROTHERY/ TAKEN FROM HIS BOOK *POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD*/WWW.MARILLION.COM/SHOP/MERCH/POSTCARDSFROMTHEROAD.HTM

Tears of a clown: Pete as the jester.

Fish applying the slap backstage on Script For A Jester's Tear tour, 1983.

a progressive rock band in the early 80s. In the space of three years, Marillion had gone from a local pub band to – which they would do at the end of the Script UK tour – headlining two nights at Hammersmith Odeon.

There was, of course, one remaining blot on the horizon. With cracks apparently evident during the recording of the album, drummer Mick Pointer, the founder of the band, was given his marching orders at the end of tour. It was a move that clearly still hurts him.

"It crushed me, absolutely," Pointer says tersely. "I was so disgusted by the way people could be. You could be just discarded that quickly."

"I think," Trewavas muses diplomatically, "there was a situation and a feeling within the band, and also within the record company, that the band needed to grow and to move on. And the same with members of the band as well, and didn't feel that Mick was advancing and growing in the same way that the rest of us were. So it was probably time. We had to grow quick and become more professional and more polished with everything we were doing. And there were kind of signs that Mick was struggling rhythmically at the time."

"They were right about Diz," adds Fish. "When we brought Pete in, being a better bass player than Diz, it showed how weak Mick was. Everybody we were bringing in was showing the weaknesses in other people in the band."

Marillion would work their way through three more drummers before finally settling on former Steve Hackett man Ian Mosley, who remains with the band to this day. Former Camel drummer Andy Ward joined in May 1983, solidifying the early Camel link. But by the end of the US Script tour it was apparent that the rigours of touring were too much for him to handle. He played percussion when Marillion played as special guests on the Saturday at the Reading Festival, with former Voyager/Alaska drummer John Marter behind the drum kit. Marter remained for Marillion's stint supporting Rush in North America, but was replaced by American drummer Jonathan Mover for one gig in Germany, before Mosley was introduced four weeks later. (Mick Pointer would resurface in successful UK prog rockers Arena, who have enjoyed a 20-odd-year career thus far.)

Marillion's line-up remained solid for a further five years. They released three more studio albums, hitting the top spot with *Misplaced Childhood* in 1985 (they also reached number two in the UK Top 40 with *Kayleigh*) and following it with the number two album *Clutching At Straws* in 1987.

Fish and Marillion went their separate ways following a show at Craigtoun Country Park in July 1988. Relations between the two have roller-coasted occasionally since then, but in 2007 Steve Rothery, Mark Kelly, Pete Trewavas and Ian Mosley performed *Market Square Heroes* with Fish in Aylesbury's Market Square at the Hobble On The Cobbles.

Both Fish and Marillion have had enduring successful careers since then. But the achievements of the men who formed Marillion during the first three years of their existence remain pretty remarkable in this day and age.

"There was a real buzz about it," says Mark Kelly.

"It's pretty crazy, really," smiles Steve Rothery.

And you know, he's probably right.

Steve Rothery's photos are taken from his book, Postcards From The Road, available to buy at www.marillion.com/shop/merch/postcardsfromtheroad.htm,

The Genesis Of The Jester

Mark Wilkinson's vibrant art has been synonymous with Marillion since their debut single. But how did a brief to create a manic jester help launch the illustrator's career in the 1980s?

Words: Dom Lawson **Images:** Mark Wilkinson

It's 1982. Artist Mark Wilkinson had been a freelance illustrator for four years after completing art college. Working primarily on book covers, early computer game promotional art and portraiture, he harboured a strong desire to get into the world of album cover art, inspired by the likes of Mati Klarwein (who painted Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* and Santana's *Abraxas*, among others) and was fully immersed in the wild, wonderful sights and sounds of prog, krautrock and artful post-punk. When opportunity came knocking, Wilkinson grabbed it with both hands.

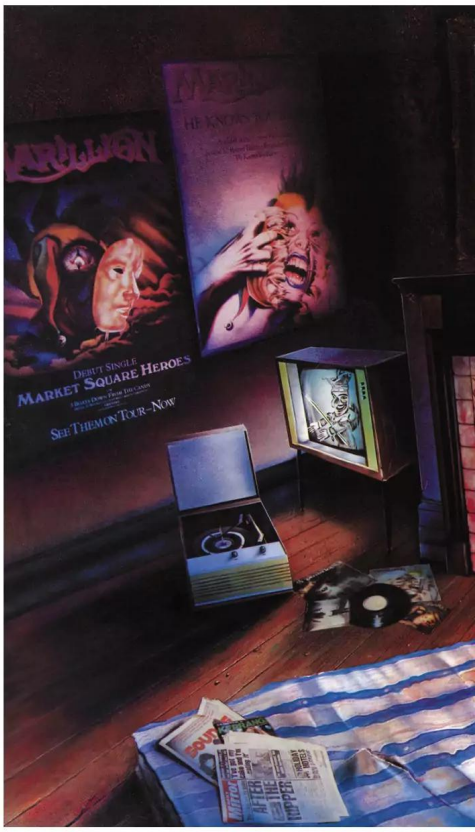
"Jo Mirowski at Torchlight Studios had been given the brief for designing [artwork for] the early singles and first album for Marillion by his regular client EMI Records. He was looking for a new artist, someone unknown in the field of album cover art. He thought it would be more interesting to do that than use someone who was more established. But it was a risk, and he knew it."

The young Wilkinson's first job for Marillion was to create a cover for their debut single, *Market Square Heroes*. Essentially, this was an audition – if he delivered the goods, Wilkinson was first in line for a more permanent role.

"I had yet to meet the band when Jo called me into his studio for the brief," he recalls. "I took notes. They wanted a jester. It related to a poem Fish had written called *The Crying Jester*, I believe, but it was also loosely based on a character called Brick, who would rant loudly at passers-by in the Market Square in Aylesbury where the band lived. For the first image, they wanted to hide him slightly, so he could be fully revealed on the next single and album, so a mask was suggested.

Mark Wilkinson in his studio, 1982.

"For me, the jester represents freedom."
Mark Wilkinson



Also, the 'Eye Of Horus' had been an early visual symbol for the band on backdrops and T–shirts. I squidged a developing Polaroid of my own eye for reference, added running kohl eye make-up, plonked a cockade hat on his head and, bish bosh, I had a jester!"

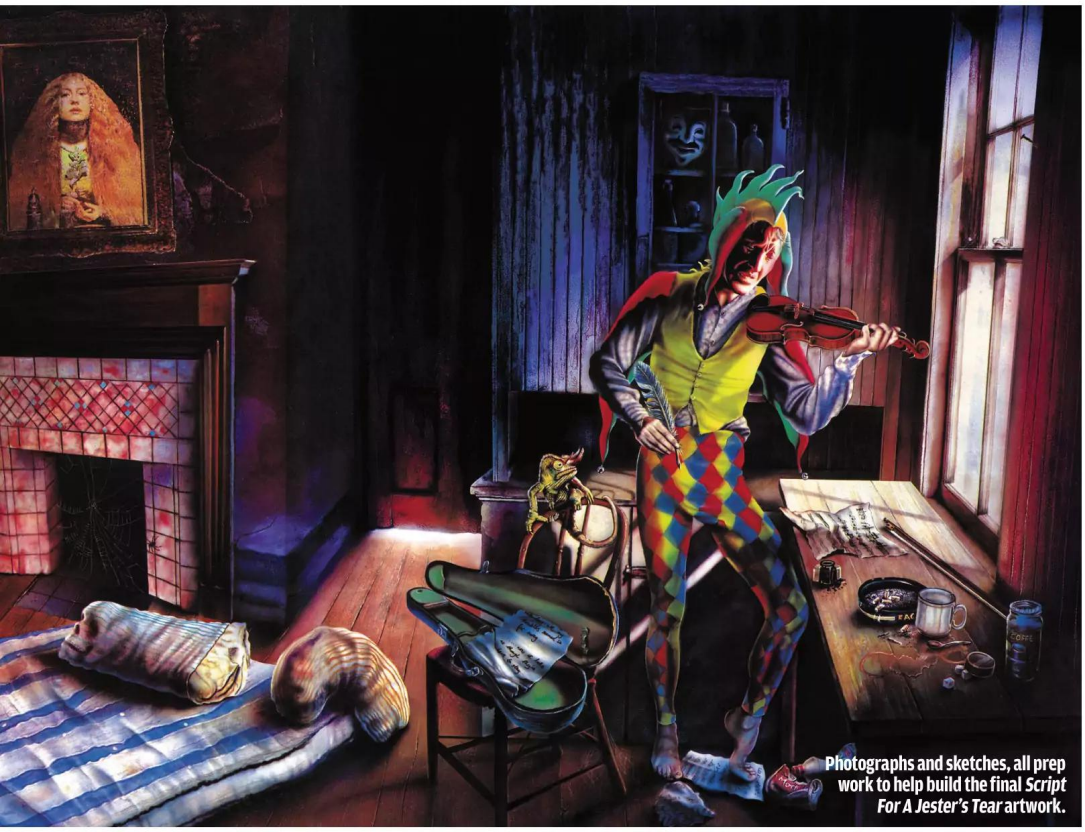
As Marillion's popularity began to increase at a startling rate, Wilkinson found himself employed officially by the band, who were extremely pleased with both the *Market Square Heroes* sleeve and the subsequent *He Knows You Know* single sleeve, on which the jester bursts through his mask to dramatic effect.

Wilkinson's next job was the big one, however: it was time to discuss ideas for the cover for Marillion's debut album, *Script For A Jester's Tear*.

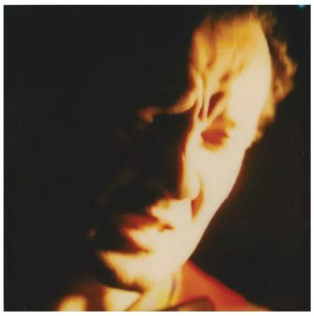
"Fish took out a piece of paper with various ideas jotted down. The jester was to be in a seedy bedsit, with the sense of urban decay: mouldy walls, spider webs, a filthy mattress on the bare boards. He was playing an instrument while struggling to write a lyric. Somebody suggested a violin, rather than a guitar or piano. They also talked about having a chameleon in the mix. Looking back at it now, I suppose it was a defiant statement and visually at odds with the times."

Although he had followed Marillion's progress from the very beginning, Wilkinson admits that he was unaware that the band were teetering on the brink of genuine mainstream success as they launched their first album.

"I wanted to create something that I'd be proud of for my first album cover.



Photographs and sketches, all prep work to help build the final *Script For A Jester's Tear* artwork.

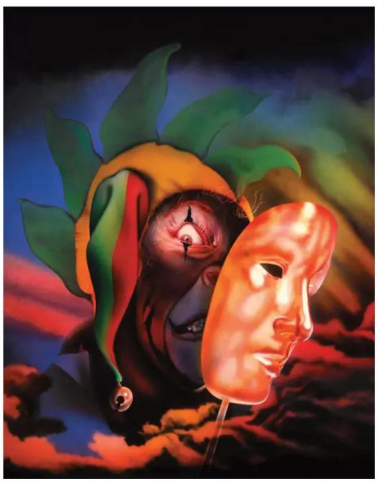


I hoped *Script...* would stand out in the record racks and get noticed.

"But their success totally surprised me. I saw them rise up very fast, and totally confound their critics through sheer hard work and inventiveness. In turn, my own career flourished."

As Marillion surged forward, so Wilkinson had to maintain his own creative momentum. For the band's second album, *Fugazi*, in 1984, the jester appears amid yet more cryptic detail and mystery. Despite its bright colours and modernist sheen, the cover art clearly indicated that Fish's lyrical (and perhaps personal) world was getting darker and weirder.

"I intentionally made *Fugazi* much brighter in tone. I wanted to create a visual counterpoint to *Script*," says Wilkinson. "'A clean acid trip' was what Fish said when he first saw it! But I don't really know what's going on. I mean, I painted it, so I should, but it confuses me even now! There was much talk about Vietnam in general, and *Apocalypse Now* in particular when we met to discuss it: *The Heart of Darkness*, incubi, nightmare demons and sex."



***Fugazi*: the "clean acid trip" according to Fish.**

A self-portrait of sorts to get the final *Market Square Heroes* cover.

Having established himself as integral to Marillion's holistic approach to music, Wilkinson continued to work with the band up until Fish's departure in 1988.

The jester made a few more appearances along the way, most notably escaping through a window on the back cover of *Misplaced Childhood*. You can also see the corner of his cockade hat peeking out from Torch's pocket on the *Clutching At Straws* sleeve. But for Wilkinson, the jester was something more than just a handy metaphorical device for a passionate young band.

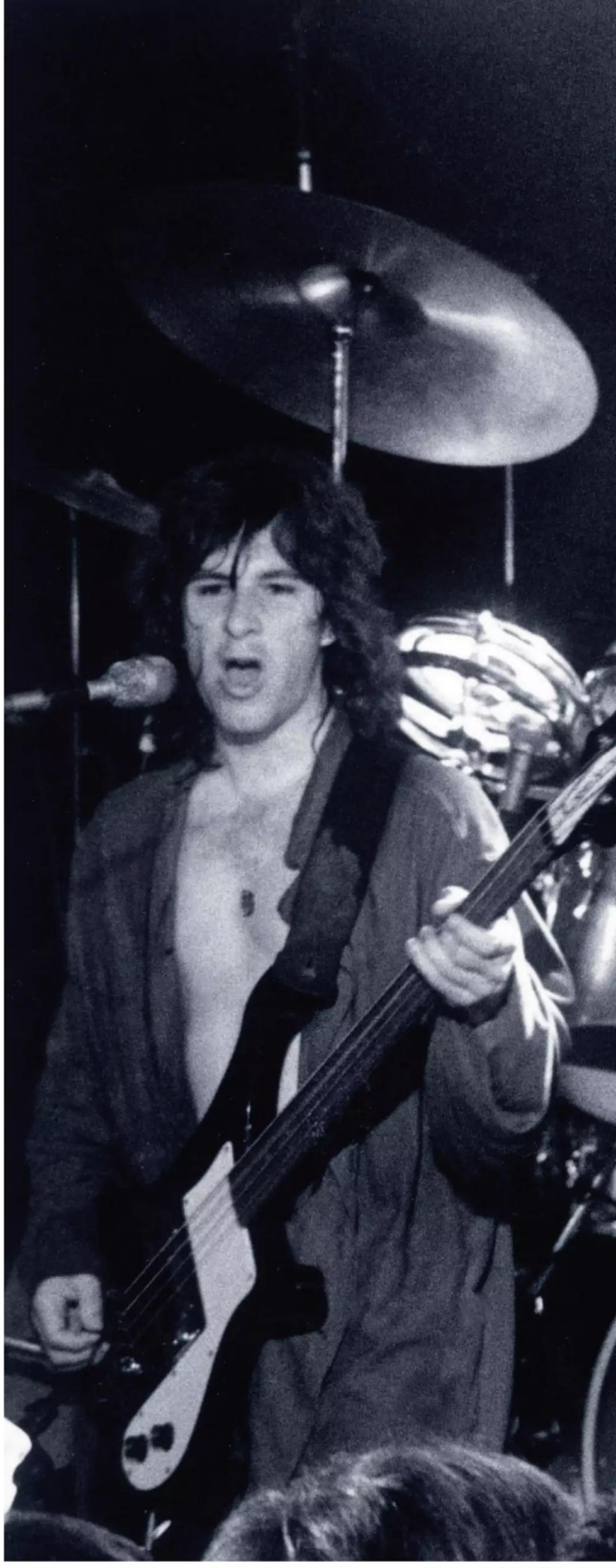
"For me, the jester represents freedom," he concludes. "My work before him was one tied to the visions of authors, art directors, agents and salesmen. I was a gun for hire. After *Script For A Jester's Tear*, that all changed. People came to me for ideas as well as pictures. For that alone I will always be grateful."

Illustrations and drawings © Mark Wilkinson. Art prints in various sizes available at www.masque-studio.com.

“Are you following me?”

So urged Fish on Marillion’s debut single, *Market Square Heroes* – and the troops would follow them as they released their classic debut album, *Script For A Jester’s Tear*. But amid the triumph, trouble was brewing....

Words: Dave Everley



Somewhere amid the flotsam and jetsam of the past, Fish has a collection of yellowing pieces of paper. There are a dozen or so of them, dating back to the early 80s. They’re the rejection letters his old band Marillion received from every British record company they approached in an attempt to get a record deal.

“It was a struggle to get noticed,” says the singer today with a snort. “We weren’t fashionable. I discovered a long time ago that ‘fashionable’ is for short people. But there was a real arrogance about us: ‘We’re gonna make it.’”

That arrogance paid off in spades. Within a couple of years, not only would Marillion be signed to EMI – the biggest label of them all – but they would release a pair of albums that would give prog a much-needed shot in the arm. Those records, *Script For A Jester’s Tear* and *Fugazi*, would see this unfashionable five-piece from Aylesbury become the figureheads of a brand new neo-prog movement. They weren’t the first band of their generation to put out a full length album of some sort – Twelfth Night and Pallas beat them – but they were certainly the most successful, and arguably the most important.

Marillion had built an audience the old-fashioned way: by playing live. Their combination of persistence, stubbornness and the fact that they were becoming too big to ignore eventually paid off, resulting in a deal with EMI, who released their first singler, *Market Square Heroes*.

By the time EMI installed Marillion in a shared house in Fulham in September 1982 to prepare for *Script For A Jester’s Tear*, that confidence was growing by the day, even if living on top of each other was a baptism of fire for the newer members.

“That was interesting,” says Peter Trewavas with a laugh. “Mark [Kelly, keyboard player] and myself hadn’t been in the band for that long, so we were all still getting to know each other. Certain people I got on with quicker than others. I didn’t know how to treat Fish. He was very headstrong. I tended to keep him at arm’s length.”

Nick Tauber had been brought in to produce the record after David Hitchcock, who had worked on *Market Square Heroes*, was injured in a car crash. Tauber produced Thin Lizzy’s early records, and had recently had success with new-wave banshee Toyah.

“Nick was brilliant,” says Fish. “He filtered out some of the superfluous bits, he helped with the sound. It just added to the momentum of it all.”

Script For A Jester’s Tear contained six songs, only one of which, *He Knows You Know*, came in at under seven minutes. All of the songs had existed in one form or another for a year or more, with the exception of the title track, which was inspired by Fish’s turbulent love life.

“They played *Script*... back in the Marquee studios. I remember going through to the lounge and having a manly weep...”

Fish

"We were selling out the Marquee, and had quite a fanbase." Marillion rock their home from home, August 1982.

"I was getting involved in my first serious relationship, and all the questions and issues that brought with it. There was a lot of introspection going on in the lyrics. If I look back, it was put across in a very naïve way."

While the band paid lip service to their influences – not least in Mark Kelly's keyboard textures and Steve Rothery's restless guitar work – there was a distinctly modern feel to it. This was new music for a new decade.

"There was a kind of punk thing, a real spit and venom, about it," says Fish. "It might have been all clever-clever music-wise, but the delivery had a lot more attack. There was a lot of anger and aggression and angst. I'm Scottish. It goes with the territory."

It was that anger that set Marillion apart from what had come before them, as well as their peers at the time. Discarding the whimsical window dressing of the previous generations, Fish's lyrics veered between rage, frustration and heartbreak.

"I wasn't the clichéd art-school person you normally expect in a prog band," says Fish. "I wasn't part of the Charterhouse squad. I was Scottish working in England. I felt a certain amount of isolation."

His ire was most apparent in the juddering *Garden Party*, the second single from the album and arguably its highlight. A pointed broadside at the upper classes, it was the anti-*Brideshead Revisited*: a furious, sarcastic class-war anthem that punched and jabbed like a Muirhouse street fighter. It had been conceived during an ill-fated trip to Cambridge a few years earlier.

"I was going out with a girl down there in 1980," he says. "Diz [Minnitt, Marillion bassist between 1981 and 1982] and I both ended up staying in a Halls Of Residence. We figured there was more chance of getting musicians together and finding gigs. It was really naïve – clutching at straws, so to speak. I always had a chip on my shoulder about blue bloods, the whole class thing."

It wasn't all angst and frustration. "There was a whole Floyd mentality to it," says Fish. "Which was, 'Let's do this crazy shit. Let's record the secretaries from The Marquee at the beginning of *He Knows You Know*.'"

For *Forgotten Sons*, they needed someone for the part of the newsreader. Their first choice was ITN anchor Trevor McDonald.

"Yeah, but he was too fucking expensive," says Fish. "We didn't have the budget, so we ended up listening to these tapes of actors doing voiceovers. There was one guy saying, [posh TV announcer's voice] 'Applecake'. We said, 'That's the guy!'" The guy in question was Peter Cockburn, whose CV included as a TV announcer on ATV, as well as a cameo appearance in *Carry On Camping*.

The members of Marillion have different memories of the first time they listened back to *Script*.... Steve Rothery recalls being quietly impressed: "I was really pleased with what we'd done." Pete Trewavas remebers the first time he heard *Garden Party* on a car radio: "We piled around this car with the doors open, listening to us being played on the radio."

The first time Fish heard it from start to finish, he cried. "They played it back in the Marquee studios," he says. "I remember going through to the lounge and having a manly weep."

When the album was released on March 14, 1982, housed in an iconic sleeve featuring a painting by Mark Wilkinson, it polarised opinions in the press, if not among prog fans.

"The NME hated us and what we represented," says Fish. "They thought we'd been killed off. They objected to the fact that we'd raised our progressive rock heads." By contrast, Kerrang! and Sounds heralded Marillion as the figureheads of a new prog revival. That didn't sit well with Fish.

"I never saw us as being champions of anything," says Fish. "We were just doing what we did, and doing it really fucking well. You've got to remember that we were streets ahead of anything else that was around us. We hit the Hammy Odeon on the Script... tour. There was nobody else coming close to playing those kind of numbers."

Whether he likes it or not, it's hard to argue with the impact Script... had on the prog scene. Not only did it prog fans something to celebrate, but it also went a long way to resurrecting a commercially moribund genre.

"Everybody was into new wave and American stuff," says Pete Trewavas. "Record companies didn't know what to do about all that other stuff that used to be popular. What we did was make other labels realise there were more types of bands you could sign."

Not everyone would be around for the ride. Tensions were growing between drummer Mick Pointer, who had founded the band as Silmarillion, and the rest, who felt there were issues with his drumming.

"People tried to deal with it in a subtle way: 'Mick, do you think you could take some drum lessons to discover some different aspects to drumming?' That went down like sick in a space suit. Everybody was walking on eggshells. People wanted us to get rid of Mick before *Script*..., but the band stuck by him."

The tensions got worse, and the decision was made to fire Pointer. after the end of the *Script*... tour, he was no longer the drummer in the band he had founded a few years earlier.

As 1983 marched toward its mid-point, Marillion were faced with the task of writing a follow-up to Script. But even more urgent was finding a new drummer.

They had a few names in mind. Chief among them was Andy Ward, formerly drummer UK prog band Camel, who Marillion had once rehearsed next door to.

"I was a big Camel fan, and Andy was one of my favourite drummers," says Steve Rothery. "It made sense to ask him."

Ward agreed, making his first appearance dressed as a schoolboy in the video for Script's second single, Garden Party, released in June 1983 and defying the naysayers by reaching No.16 in the UK.

With Ward onboard, the band played their first shows in Europe, hitting Germany, Holland and Denmark, before returning to the UK to play the Glastonbury festival, then a haven for travelers, anarchists and political insurgents.

But there was a growing suspicion that Ward might not be the right drummer for Marillion after all. Ward was troubled by depression, attempted to deal with the problem via alcohol. Where other members enjoyed a tipple, Ward was hard to deal with due to a combination of drunkeness and mental health issues.

Things boiled over on a US tour, when Ward's antics resulted in the band getting thrown out of a Holiday Inn in New York. The drummer told the band he wanted to go home, and the tour was swiftly curtailed. Marillion were back at square one.

Two more drummers followed in quick succession. Former Mr Big drummer briefly played with the band, joining in time for their appearance at the Reading Festival – though, bizarrely, Ward briefly rejoined to add percussion during the encore.

Marter was ultimately a place holder, departing after a disastrous US tour supporting Rush which found Marillion barracked by partisan audiences. His replacement was Jonathan Mover, who had played with Toyah Wilcox. Mover was a confident American. "He was a great drummer, but he was probably too headstrong," says Pete Trewavas.

In the end it was Fish who decided that Mover wasn't the man they wanted either. "He basically told us, 'Either he goes or I go,'" says Steve Rothery.

There was only ever going to be one winner in that situation. Square one beckoned again.

Ian Mosley had never heard Marillion before he joined, but he had heard the name. A seasoned session man who once played in the pit of the controversial musical Hair, he had spent the past few years playing with ex-Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett, where

"There was a lot of anger and aggression and angst. I'm Scottish. It goes with the territory."

Fish

Ooh, all that suede, muslin and iron crosses. It's 1982, and Marillion's first ever EMI press shot!

ALL IMAGES: EMI/PRESS

fans would mention the name of this new bunch of prog rock hotshots who echoed the greats of the past while updating the sound for the 80s.

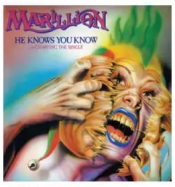
When Marillion's manager John Arnison called to ask if he was interested in the job, he though what any self-employed musician would think: "I'll give it ago." Within a couple of weeks, he was heading to Wales to meet the band.

"My initial thoughts was the material they were working on felt totally natural, it was right up my street," says Mosley. "There was an energy. They had quite a lot of the skeleton of the stuff written. From the word go, I thought, "I'm really enjoying this." And they were a good bunch of fellas as well."

Marillion themselves were putting on a brave front. Their drummer-related tribulations, together with the prospect of writing an album that would build on the success of its predecessor, meant that the pressure was mounting.

"It was classic Second Album Syndrome," says Mark Kelly. "You have years to write your first album, then you go into the next one with nothing. And you've got the record company going: 'Give us another album!'"

***Garden Party*: from June 1983, the band's first single to break the UK Top 20...**



... after January release *He Knows You Know* sweated junkie paranoia from every pore!

The cupboard wasn't completely bare. Fish had books full of lyrics that he used to carry round. "Some of those were written before I joined the band, stuff like *She Chameleon*," recalls Kelly. "The opening lines of *Incubus* were written for *Script...* - it was a little soliloquy that he wanted to open the album with, which we argued about. So he was, like, 'OK, I'm going to use it on the next album.'"

Marillion began recording their second album at Manor Studios near Oxford in November 1983 with Nick Tauber once again behind the desk. But Fish's preparation wasn't matched by his bandmates. "We were struggling to write the music while we were in the studio," admits Kelly. "

It was a harder album to make than *Script*.... The process dragged on so long that it had to be interrupted by a US tour at the end of 1983. Deadlines were missed and extra studio time frantically booked.

The end result was far from a disaster, but it wasn't as assured as the debut. Packaged in another instantly iconic Mark Wilkinson sleeve, this one designed to look like the aftermath of a bad acid trip, the fraught nature of its creation spilled over into *Incubus* and the angry, claustrophobic title track.

"And I the pressure showed," says Mark Kelly. "*Fugazi* isn't as strong an album as the one before or the one that followed."

Unfortunately for Marillion, it wasn't as successful. *Script...* had sold around 150,000 copies. *Fugazi* cost twice as much but only sold around 100,000 copies. "Sales were down and costs were up," says Kelly. "The record company were sitting there thinking, 'Hmm...'"

Breathing space came in the shape of *Real To Reel*, a budget-priced live mini-album suggested by John Arnison that sold surprisingly well in Germany and Holland, temporarily assuaging their paymasters at EMI.

"It was, like, 'You can make another album, but you're going to have to do it on the cheap,'" says Kelly. "Berlin was cheap because the Wall had just come down. Which is why we ended up there recording *Misplaced Childhood*."

Marillion's third album wouldn't just steady things after the stumble of *Fugazi*, it elevated them to another level entirely. Success would bring new rewards — and an entirely different set of problems. But that was in the future. For now, this unfashionable band from Aylesbury had proved the world wrong.

Q&A Steve Rothery

Accomplished photographer, frustrated keyboard wizard, prog rock flame-keeper – Marillion's guitarist is all of these and more. The man who signed up to the band when they were still called Silmarillion looks back on 40 rollercoaster years that have swung from the highs of the 80s and the lows of the 90s to their current resurgence as the kings of the "upmarket" holiday camp…

Words: Mark Blake **Portrait:** Kevin Nixon

Steve Rothery nearly caught fire the first time he played a gig with Marillion. "The career could have ended there and then," he says matter-of-factly.

That was 37 years ago. Marillion were still called Silmarillion, and making their debut appearance in front of one man and his dog (and a teenage Steven Wilson) at Berkhamsted Civic Centre in suburban Hertfordshire. But more on that story later…

In 2017, Steve Rothery and Marillion are still intact, and their impressive showing in the Top 100 Greatest Prog Anthems list illustrates the level of affection in which they're held. "I think Marillion appeal to people who are looking for something a bit more… maybe a bit deeper," offers Rothery. "Something you can sink your teeth into."

An uncommonly grounded musician – the term 'rock star' feels inappropriate – Steve Rothery has manned his corner of the Marillion stage with understated efficiency and gentle virtuosity since 1980. Not for him the drink, drugs and divorce papers that have felled some of his heroes and contemporaries. "Everything has a price," he says philosophically.

Rothery is talking to *Prog* from Aylesbury, the Buckinghamshire town celebrated in Marillion's debut single, 1982's *Market Square Heroes*. The 57-year-old guitarist, songwriter and, one suspects, Marillion's prog rock conscience, is a man still charmingly fascinated by music: his own and other people's – especially Genesis and Camel's. But where did it all begin?

You were born in South Yorkshire and lived in North Yorkshire until you were nearly 20. Do you still consider yourself a Yorkshireman?

Deep down I probably do. I lived in Whitby until I was 19. But I've moved around so much since then, it's all started to get a bit blurred. My daughter and now my son were at university in York, and I spend a lot of time there. It's still one of my favourite places in the country.

What was the first music you remember listening to?

Like every one of my generation, I was exposed to The Beatles. My uncle still has a reel-to-reel tape recording of me singing a Beatles song, when I was three or four. Yes [puts on faux-serious voice], my earliest recording. But then I got really into film music when I was about 11 or 12.

What specific films?

I started listening to all the John Barry soundtracks for the James Bond films, and the score for *The Dam Busters*. I went deep into this stuff on vinyl. I also had an album called *Space Experience* by John Keating. I think it was one of the first synthesiser records. That record got me really interested in synthesisers.

Are you a frustrated keyboard wizard, then?

Yes. I originally wanted to be a keyboard player. My parents considered buying a piano, but they couldn't get one – it wouldn't have fitted in the house. But after the film soundtracks and John Keating I got into rock music and guitars when I was 15 [in 1974].

What converted you?

I fell in love with Genesis after I heard *The Knife* on Alan Freeman's Saturday Rock show. After that, I discovered Camel, Yes, King Crimson…

Don't you think that Camel are the great unsung heroes of 70s prog rock?

Absolutely. Especially those early Camel albums. There's something magical about those records – a very special chemistry. They were a big influence. Really, my guitar playing is a mix of [Camel's] Andy Latimer, Steve Hackett and David Gilmour.

So you're not shy about mentioning those influences.

I have no problem being compared to them at all. They're the people whose music I grew up with. It's funny, because I know Andy Latimer and Steve Hackett really well now. David Gilmour, though… ummm…

Gilmour's a bit more remote, isn't he?

Yeah, he's up there in the stratosphere.

What was the first song you ever wrote?

I can't remember the name. I wrote bits when I lived in Whitby. I had a band with a friend of mine who had a complete Beatles fixation. We were never going to get signed. I didn't really start writing until I moved down south to Aylesbury and joined Marillion.

What was the first piece of music you remember writing in Marillion, then?

Probably a song called *Close* which later became *The Web*. Then there was another track called *The Tower* which became part of *Grendel*.

What was your debut Marillion gig like?

It was in Berkhamsted [in the Civic Centre, March 1, 1980] and a very young Steven Wilson was in the audience. This was when we were still a four-piece before Fish joined. Our original bass player Doug [Irvine] was also the singer.

Were you any good?

It was… er… great. There were only a handful of people there. Something went wrong with the pyrotechnics. There was too much and I felt this sheet of flame shoot up my back. I was just happy to be gigging. That was the dream then – just to play live.

Aylesbury Friars was one of *the* great music venues. Bowie and Genesis played there in the 70s and Marillion in the 80s. What was it like when you first arrived in town?

It was still in its heyday when I moved down. The music was incredible, and there was a real sense of community. You would go there even if you weren't nuts about the band playing that night. I remember seeing Camel on the *Nude* tour and King Crimson on the *Discipline* tour. I also saw The Police there a couple of times. The bands playing there were sometimes out of all proportion to the size of the venue.

What was your first impression of Fish?

Very tall and very Scottish. I had no problem understanding his accent but not many people in the band could follow it.

In His Element: Steve Rothery.

PRESS

Marillion with "the missing piece" Fish, centre.

Obviously, he was very self-confident and very driven. You could hear his influences, but there was something distinctive about the way he blended them together. Even then he was a great lyricist. We knew we'd found the missing piece.

If Fish was very self-confident and driven, where did you fit into the band? How would you define Steve Rothery's role in Marillion?
In the early days I suppose I was the main musical writer, but I'm not naturally a pushy person. I'm not ego-driven. My focus has always been the music. These days nobody assumes the role of leader. Marillion really has become a democracy.

You mentioned your son and daughter. How important is family to you?
Very. My daughter Jennifer is a songwriter. My son, Michael, is in his third year studying computer science. My wife Jo and I celebrated our 30th anniversary last year.

Thirty years is going some in the music business. What's your secret?
Many things. Behaving yourself? Yes! [laughing] I married the right person, which is always a plus. Jo gave me a lot of love and support. Sometimes, when you're away on the road, and you've got a young family, it's like your partner becomes a single parent, and it takes someone quite dedicated to pull through that.

But is she a Marillion fan?
Yes, she really is. My son and daughter are as well. You get the sense everyone in the family understands the sacrifice.

You've always seemed like a very clean-living musician.
I've never been seduced by the rock'n'roll fantasy. That's not what's real for me. That's not what life's about.

You published a Marillion photo diary, *Postcards From The Road*, in 2016. Photography seems to be your only vice.
Yes. I've been interested in photography since I was about 14, when I used to wander around Whitby taking pictures. I had an old Zenit B SLR. Once I started earning a bit of money around the time of [Marillion debut album] *Script For A Jester's Tear*, I got myself a Pentax. I don't know what drives me to do it, but it's something I love.

Are you like everyone else these days, though, taking pictures on your iPhone?
I try to take a camera with me. But I've dragged huge camera bags around the world over the years, and you get sick of that. There are many times when the best camera is the one you've got with you – and that happens to be your phone. It's OK, as long as the light's good. If not, you will struggle.

> "I originally wanted to be a keyboard player. My parents considered buying a piano, but they couldn't get one – it wouldn't have fitted in the house."

GETTY

You mentioned your love of soundtrack music growing up. Is it true Marillion were offered the soundtrack to *Highlander*? You turned it down and Queen got the gig instead?

Yes, apparently, that's what I was told. It was a management decision not to do it. We were touring the world at the time on the success of *Misplaced Childhood*. So there was no time. Fish got offered an acting role as well around then. It was one of those great 'What if's.

Would you still like to do a soundtrack?

Yes. I did some music for an American PBS documentary about bullying [the Emmy-winning *From The Heart* in 2014]. So it would be great to do another soundtrack. It doesn't have to be a big budget film – something interesting, maybe an art film.

What's it like being mates with Steve Hackett when you're an old Genesis fan?

We only became good friends about three years ago, and it's very strange hearing these stories about Genesis' old days when he's one of the reasons I picked up a guitar. We go to dinner quite regularly, and it often ends up with my wife Jo and his wife Jo down one end of the table and me and Steve at the other, talking guitars and world domination.

Marillion played Cruise To The Edge in 2014 and 2015. How is it being stuck at sea with a bunch of prog rock fans?

It's surreal – a bit *Twilight Zone*. Our fans are fantastic, but you are on a boat with all these people who share a common passion for this kind of music. And, let's face it, there are not that many of those people in the world, so to put them all together on a boat does warp the fabric of reality. But at the same time, it's a lot of fun, and we've met some lovely people.

Have Marillion ever had a mad fan or a stalker?

Very occasionally you get the scary ones. There was a girl in the 80s who used to write Fish letters in her own blood, and there was an American fan who you could imagine... er... having a John Lennon moment with. You have to be careful, but we been incredibly lucky.

It's been almost 30 years since Fish left. There was bad blood and recrimination at the time. But what lessons have you learned since then? Is there anything you'd have done differently?
Funnily enough, not so much to do with when Fish left. But more to do with what happened a few years later after we sacked our manager, John Arnison. This was around the time we were signed with Castle Communications [in the late 90s and 2000s]. I made a point of trying to understand the music industry, because when you're a musician in a band, that isn't the priority – the music is. So I read a few books about how this industry I'd been working in for 20 years actually worked.

What did you discover?
It gave me some perspective on how crazy our situation was in the 80s. We were selling out stadiums and having gold and platinum albums, but we'd seen very little of the money. There were various frustrations and things happening that could have been resolved by someone with a bit more vision and a clearer head.

So what you're saying is your manager let you down and you should be richer than you are?
Yes. We sold something like 10 million albums. We should all be in living in country piles with crunchy drives... But at the end of the day you have to look at where you are in your life, and put it all in perspective.

That must have hurt, though?
Yeah, at the same time, you can't help but feel a little... annoyed.

What was your first impression of Steve Hogarth?
Steve's music publishers Rondor sent us a cassette tape, and his voice reminded me of Paul Buchanan from The Blue Nile. When he came in though, we were rehearsing in [bassist] Pete's [Trewavas] garage. Pete has cats and Steve is allergic. So there was this short period when he sang a couple of things, and we were blown away by his voice, and then a lot of time spent talking outside in the freezing cold. When he was offered the job, he had to go away and think about it – which we found quite strange and more than a little arrogant.

Steve Rothery: reluctant rock star.

Don't you think his arrogance turned out to be a positive, though? Surely, better that than some Fish clone desperate to join Marillion?
Absolutely – and we auditioned enough of those to know that's not what we wanted. But Steve had also had an offer to play keyboards for The The – who were ultra-cool back then [1989], whereas we were as far away from ultra-cool as you could get.

If Marillion are having an argument does Hogarth ever lose his rag and go, "Christ! I could have been in The The"?
Ha! I'm sure he can imagine an alternative reality. But I think he'd gotten to the point where he was so disillusioned with the business he was thinking about walking away and becoming a postman in The Dales. In the end, it all worked out. We went down to the mushroom farm near Brighton to give it a go [write and demo 1989's *Season's End*], and the rest is history.

If music hadn't worked out as a career, what job would you have had?
Probably photography. It's the only other thing that's called to me in a similar way to music. When our original bass player left, just before Fish joined, I went for a job interview at the National Film Archive in Aston Clinton [in Buckinghamshire]. That's the thing that could have diverted me off this path.

If you were trying to convert a non-believer to Marillion, what album would you play them?

> "I've never been seduced by the rock'n'roll fantasy. That's not what's real for me. That's not what life's about."

KEVIN NIXON

The new one [2016's *F.E.A.R.*]. Of course [laughs]. I honestly think it's one of our best-crafted albums. *Afraid Of Sunlight* is another one of my favourites – a fantastic collection of songs, each one so different. A lot of people also like *Marbles*.

F.E.A.R. was your highest charting album since *Clutching At Straws* in 1987. Is the tide finally turning for Marillion?
We have seen things slowly turn around. Maybe because we're almost like the last men standing in the prog world. But I think you'll always have that thing if you had big success 30 odd years ago. Some people will always associate Marillion with Fish. There are still some people who think Marillion are a Scottish heavy metal band.

When you first heard Radiohead's *OK Computer* in 1997, did you not find it galling? There wasn't much difference between, say, *Karma Police* and some of the songs on '94's *Brave*.
[Long pause] Yeah, it's funny isn't it when you see that photograph of very early Radiohead and there's a Marillion poster in the background...

But you can see the comparisons? No offence, but you're both groups of earnest men playing the same sort of music with what sounds like a lot of repressed emotion.
I know. But Radiohead managed to encapsulate whatever that 'student band' cool thing is, and it never seems to go away. I thought their new album [2016's *A Moon Shaped Pool*] had some great songs on it, and there is a great creative force there. But it's funny how some bands can do no wrong.

I get the impression that Marillion being called a 'prog' band doesn't bother you?
For me, there's only good and bad in music. Labels are meaningless, and the true meaning of 'progressive' is music without any self-imposed boundaries. It's having the freedom to work outside the constraints of conventional song structure – almost like a soundtrack type approach to creating songs. It's whatever you want to call it.

Almost every Marillion album since 2001's *Anoraknophobia* has been crowdfunded. Were you always convinced it would work?
It was unheard of. But we had to try. Our deal with Castle Communications ended, we had to decide – do we sign with another small label or try something else? That's when Mark [Kelly, keyboard player] had the idea: Let's take control ourselves, mail the fans direct and see if they'd be willing to pay upfront. It's one of the reasons we're still around. Our fans want it – they want the ultra-edition of the new album.

Will there be another Steve Rothery solo album?
Yes. I will do another solo album next year, but this year I have another project I can't talk about yet. It's very exciting but I've got to make sure it's going to work before I announce it. *Prog* will be the first to know.

When was the last time you spoke to Fish?
Quite recently, actually. We get on a lot better these days. We're older and wiser and we all have a different perspective. Everybody's calmed down, and everyone knows that the whole reunion thing is just not going to happen.

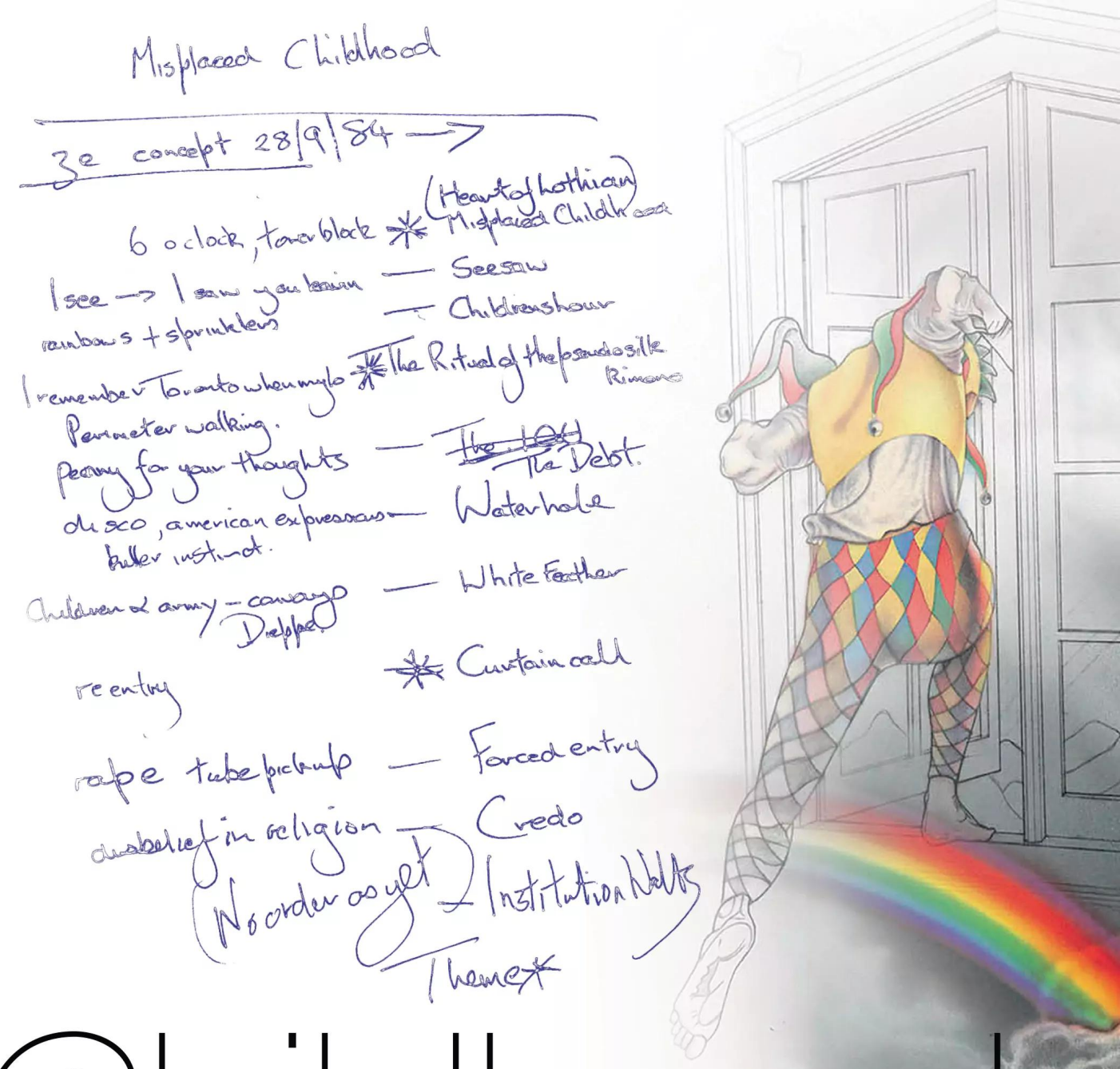
It's *never* going to happen?
No, it couldn't ever happen. I understand why people keep asking, because of what it represents to them and their lives, but no. Steve Hogarth has a T-shirt – 'The New Boy Since 1989'. We did four albums with Fish, but we've done 14 with Steve.

What's next then?
Apart from my incredibly secret new project [laughs], the Marillion Weekends are coming up [in March], in Holland, Poland, Leicester... and Chile.

Hang on, so Marillion are officially big in Chile?
Yes. There's a radio station in Santiago that plays us all the time. We're holding the convention in the same theatre we play in – the Teatro Caupolican. Every time we play there, there are 4,000 people going crazy from the first note.

And you're still big in the holiday parks?
We're doing Center Parcs in Holland. We did our first Marillion Weekend at Pontins, then we slightly upscaled to Butlins. Now we've gone completely upmarket to Center Parcs. We're going up in the world.

Still Going Strong: Rothery and Steve Hogarth on the *F.E.A.R.* tour.
DUNCAN EVERSON/FUTURE



Childhood Memories

An album inspired by lost love and drugs, *Misplaced Childhood* is the conceptual masterpiece that turned **Marillion** into bona fide stars – and the record that started to break the group. We delve deep inside of the making of a bittersweet classic.

Words: Mark Blake **Illustrations:** Mark Wilkinson **Photos:** Steve Rothery

According to Fish, Marillion owe it all to Terry Wogan. On May 20, 1985, the band made their one and only appearance on the Irishman's BBC chat show. Back then, *Wogan* was prime-time TV, and the perfect shop window for any group with a single to promote.

At the BBC Television Theatre in Shepherd's Bush, Marillion performed what the show's host called their "current smasheroonie", *Kayleigh*. At the end, lead singer Fish gave a shy smile to the camera. And after that, he says, everything changed.

The man born Derek Dick is remembering Marillion's *Wogan* performance almost 30 years later. After the show, EMI's Head Of Promotions, Malcolm Hill, took him aside. "And he said to me, 'That little smile you did at the end broke every mother's heart in Great Britain.'"

Soon after, *Kayleigh* was at No.2 in the charts, giving Marillion the biggest hit of their career. "The *Wogan* show was what did it," says Fish. "That lit the touchpaper on the whole thing."

In June, Marillion's third album, *Misplaced Childhood*, toppled Bryan Ferry's *Boys And Girls* from the top of the chart. Against all expectations, Marillion had become one of the biggest bands in Britain. "Suddenly we went from being this relatively unknown progressive rock group to a band with a big hit single and album," Fish marvels. "*Misplaced Childhood* was us sticking one finger up at the business and saying, 'Fuck you! This is a real band.'"

Misplaced Childhood turns 30 this year, and remains the biggest-selling album of both Marillion's and Fish's careers. The singer, who's now planning to retire from touring, will celebrate its birthday by performing the album in full later this year.

Marillion, meanwhile, are busy writing a new album. You sense that the past – especially their past with Fish – sometimes seems like a foreign country. But *Misplaced Childhood* is an album they remember fondly. As keyboard player Mark Kelly admits: "It was the album that saved us."

To their dedicated and growing fanbase in 1984, it might have seemed as if Marillion could do no wrong. They'd had five Top 40 singles and two Top 20 albums with 1983's *Script For A Jester's Tear* and '84's *Fugazi*. But, in fact, they were actually in danger of being dropped by their record company.

Above: Marillion on board the Learjet EMI chartered to take them to the *TOTP* studios from Berlin. Top centre: With EMI Head Of Promotions Malcolm Hill. And left: Fish backstage at *TOTP*.

"It was the album that saved our career."

Mark Kelly

"We'd got ourselves into a bit of a hole with EMI," explains guitarist Steve Rothery now. The hole had grown bigger after Marillion spent almost as much money on the video for their last single, *Assassing*, as they'd done on the whole of *Fugazi*: "And we were liable for 50 per cent of the costs."

"Looking back, we were on a bit of a knife edge," adds Kelly. "*Script For A Jester's Tear* had sold about 120,000. *Fugazi* cost twice as much but sold a bit less. If we carried on the way we were going, we weren't going to be financially viable."

It was a precursor of the situation Marillion found themselves in at the end of the 90s, and which they resolved with 2001's crowd-funded *Anoraknophobia*. In 1984, though, they did what any struggling rock band

Kay lee

Kaylee we could have a garden
Kaylee we could
we could mow the lawn on Sundays
we could capture suntans from the breeze
Kaylee
Kaylee
Kaylee

Kayleigh is it to late to say I'm sorry
Kayleigh could we get it together again
I just cant go on pretending
that it came to a natural end
Kayleigh ~~we said our love would last forever~~
~~we ever promised love forever~~
~~I never thought I'd be without you~~
~~yleigh, I hoped it'd be without you~~
~~could be friends again~~
~~said our love would last forever~~
~~we ever promised it forever~~
~~the stand our love would last forever~~
How did it come to this bitterend.

Kayleigh I never thought I'd find & missed you
Kayleigh I hoped we'd always stay friends.
we said our love would last forever
how did it come to this bitterend.

Above: Fish's handwritten lyrical development for the chart-topping *Kayleigh*.

would do: they put out a live album.

Real To Reel, released in November, was recorded at dates in Montreal and, less exotically, Leicester. It cracked the Top 10 and sold well in Europe: "Which gave the label an inkling that it might be worth sticking with us for one more album," Kelly says.

However, Marillion were in no hurry to tell EMI that their next studio release was a concept album. "That," admits Rothery, "might have been the kiss of death."

The concept for *Misplaced Childhood* came to Fish during an LSD trip. The singer had returned to his house in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, at the end of the *Fugazi* tour, feeling burnt out, but "knowing we had a difficult third album to write".

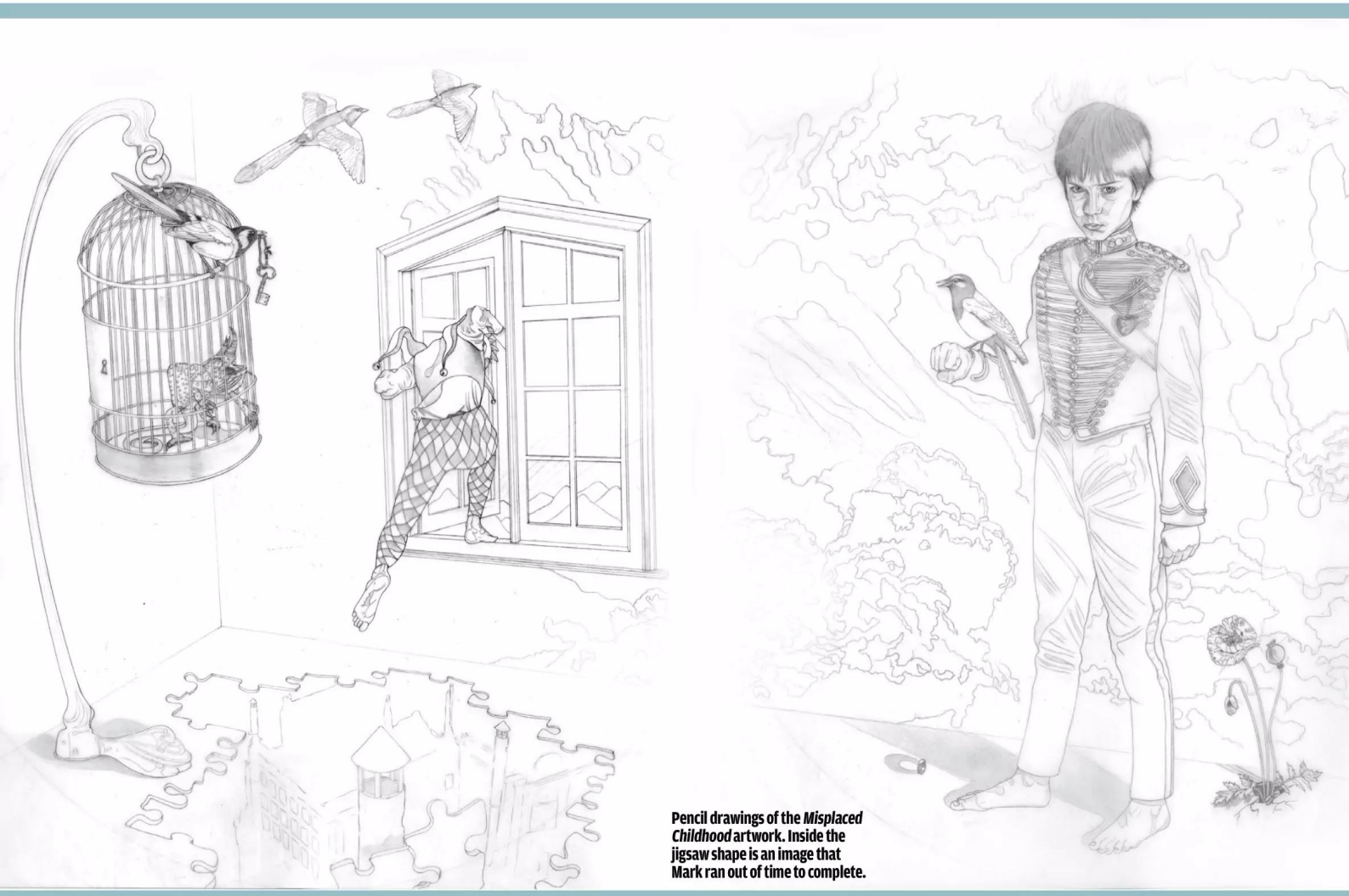
Soon after, an envelope arrived in the post with a note from an old girlfriend – "It read: 'I think you might like this'" – and a tab of 'white lightning' acid. "I was bored, sitting on my own one night, so I took half of it," Fish recalls. "Then I thought, 'Oh, this is rubbish, it's not working,' and I took the other half..." He pauses, then lets out a throaty laugh. "Aye, that old mistake."

It was seven o'clock on a warm summer's evening. With the world around him growing increasingly fuzzy, Fish jumped on his bicycle and rode to Steve Rothery's cottage nearby.

"In those days, Fish and I were on very good terms," says the guitarist. "We were the two bachelors in the band. We socialised together a lot." Does he recall Fish being under the influence? Rothery laughs: "Yes, he probably was."

"Before *Kayleigh*, we held the record for being the band who did *Top Of The Pops* the most times and saw their single go down the charts."

Steve Rothery



Pencil drawings of the *Misplaced Childhood* artwork. Inside the jigsaw shape is an image that Mark ran out of time to complete.

"IN THE END I RAN OUT OF TIME..."

Cover artist Mark Wilkinson, famed for his work with Fish-era Marillion, explains how the *Misplaced Childhood* album cover came about.

Mark Wilkinson still recalls his reaction to being told about Marillion's plans for *Misplaced Childhood*.

"This was the mid-80s, and here they were talking about doing a concept album! I really did think they were gonna be slaughtered by the media, and it would be a commercial disaster. Shows how much I knew!"

The idea for the cover was developed during a series of meetings between the band and artist.

"Fish saw this as the last part of a trilogy, which had begun with *Script For A Jester's Tear*. Although I still can't work out why he saw it that way. But what he was adamant about was that it should be the last time we see the jester on a Marillion cover. So, I took him by his word and that's why you see the jester figure literally leaving through the window on the back cover.

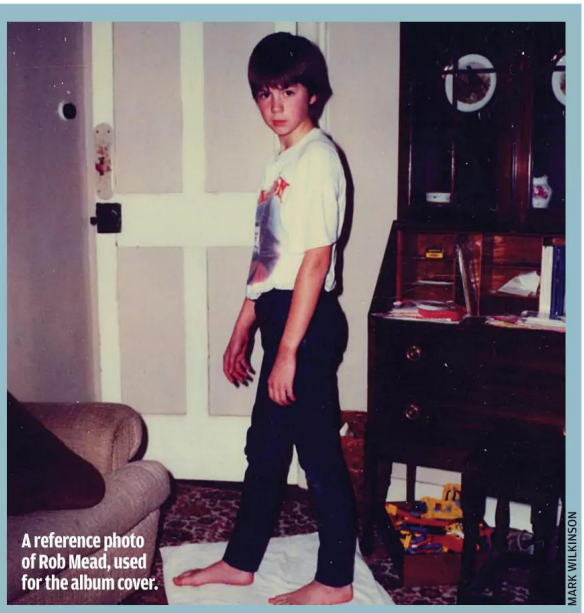
"From the start, it was decided that the there should be a boy on the front, dressed in a uniform. I had this image in my head of Emil Sinclair, the boy who was the main character in Herman Hesse's novel *Demian: The Story Of Emil Sinclair's Youth*; he seemed to carry the mark of Cain. But I had a problem finding a model to pose for it."

However, Wilkinson found the right person on his doorstep. Or, rather, in his local pub.

The final printed album sleeve... with handy space for track listings!

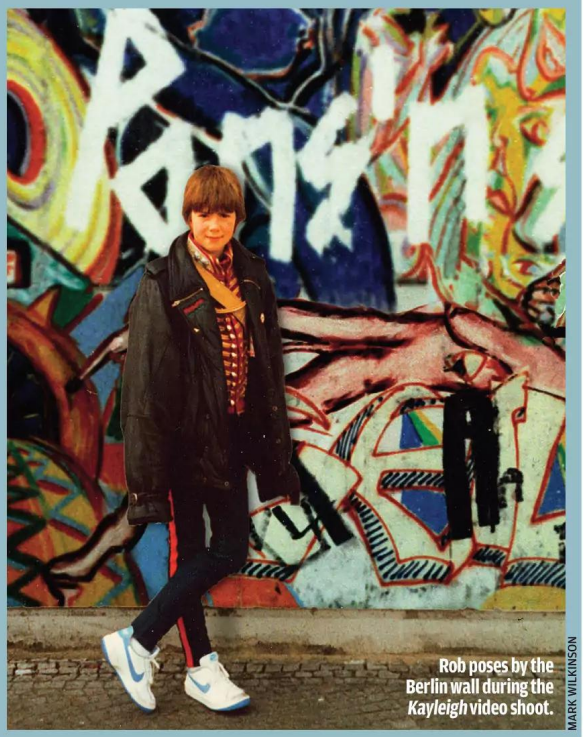
"Robert Mead was one of the landlord's sons, who was 10 at the time, and I saw him standing behind the bar one day, and I just thought he had the right personality and look for what was needed on the cover."

Mead is portrayed with bare feet, something that Wilkinson



A reference photo of Rob Mead, used for the album cover.

MARK WILKINSON



Rob poses by the Berlin wall during the *Kayleigh* video shoot.

MARK WILKINSON

acknowledges nodded towards The Beatles and their *Abbey Road* sleeve.

"Paul McCartney was, of course, shot in bare feet, which generated so many crazy theories. And I referenced this here. I was also thinking of David Hockney, who used to put socks on his models, because he couldn't paint feet! It was my way of saying that feet are important.

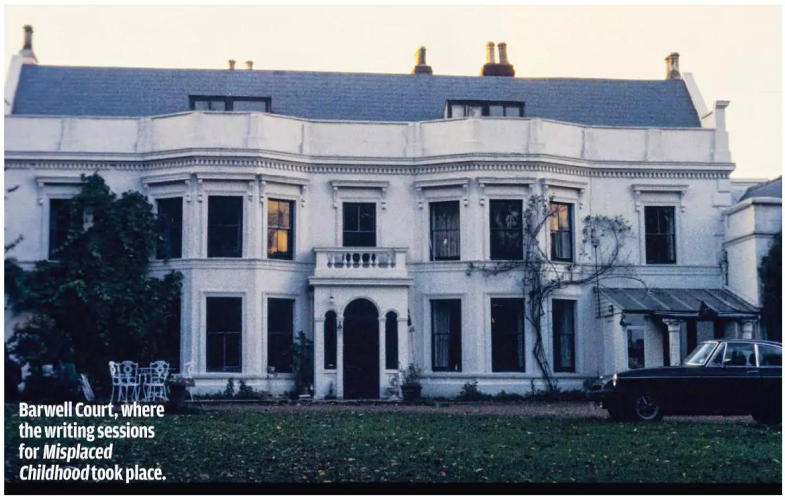
"I began by painting Robert's eyes, then did the rest of his face, and I also spent ages over the uniform he's wearing. Too long, in fact."

There's a lot of symbolism in the cover's other images.

"The poppy was also used on the *Fugazi* cover, and it is of course a symbol of death, which Fish thought was important. The rainbow and magpies are a reference to a line from the song *Childhood's End?* - *'And I saw a magpie in the rainbow, the rain had gone'*. But if you know the old nursery rhyme, one magpie means sorrow, whereas two means joy. Which is why there are two magpies."

There's also a mysterious gap on the back cover, into which the song titles were inserted. But this was left for no other reason than Wilkinson running out of time.

"The jigsaw shaped blank wasn't supposed to be there. I did intend to fill it in, but literally ran out of time. That was always happening to me." **MD**



Barwell Court, where the writing sessions for *Misplaced Childhood* took place.

Fish remembers the pair of them watching the recent film adaptation of Thomas Hardy's novel, *Tess Of The D'Urbervilles*, starring the beautiful German actor Nastassja Kinski. "Steve had a particular thing about her," laughs Fish.

But when the drug's effects became too much for Fish, he asked Rothery to drive him home. "When I got back to my house, I thought, 'OK, let's use this.'"

Fish put on a record, crouched on the floor, grabbed a notepad and began what he calls "stream-of-consciousness writing". At the time he had a print of the American artist Jerry Schurr's painting *Padres Bay* on the wall of the house ("I still have it. It's hanging in my bedroom."). Schurr's image of the sea and mountains was so hypnotic, Fish felt that he was actually inside the picture. The hallucinogenic experience paid off.

"That night I got the whole basis for what became side one of the album," Fish says. "Entire phrases and lyrics from that notebook ended up on the finished record." One of which, *Pseudo Silk Kimono*, became *Misplaced Childhood*'s opening track. As the LSD wore off, and he drifted back to normality, Fish knew he had to tell someone: "I phoned up Steve and said, 'I got it. I've nailed it.'"

Ultimately, the theme running through *Misplaced Childhood* was inspired by the 27-year-old Fish's life so far: watching childhood fade with each passing year; the thrill and attendant pressure of being in a rock band; and, crucially, the recent demise of his relationship with girlfriend Kay. It was a concept album, yes, but one very much grounded in reality.

Writing sessions for *Misplaced Childhood* began in autumn 1984 at Barwell Court, a freezing cold Victorian pile located in Chessington, Surrey. "I'd sit in the TV room with the fire on, writing lyrics," remembers Fish, "and hear the others in the next room coming up with the music."

"My memory is that it all came together very quickly," says Kelly. "We're in the process of writing an album now and we were marvelling at how we managed to write most of side one of *Misplaced Childhood* in a week." That's *Pseudo Silk Kimono*, *Kayleigh*, *Lavender*, the multi-part *Bitter Suite* and *Heart Of Lothian*. "If only all albums were that easy," he sighs.

> "In Berlin, nobody knew who we were and we could do anything we liked. And I sampled it all."
>
> **Fish**

At Barwell Court, the band were also introduced to their new producer, Chris Kimsey. "I wasn't familiar with Marillion at all," says Kimsey now. "But their A&R man, David Munns, was a good friend of mine and told me to check them out. I went to the writing sessions at Barwell Court and immediately fell in love with them."

Kimsey's CV included engineer credits for Peter Frampton's *Frampton Comes Alive!* and the Rolling Stones' *Some Girls*. "We were a bit intimidated by Chris at first," admits Fish. "But he turned out to be such an easy-going guy... and he'd done [ELP's] *Brain Salad Surgery*."

Better still, Kimsey didn't need to be sold on the idea of a concept album. "I was totally into that," he says. "Did EMI want a concept album? I don't think EMI knew what they wanted. They just wanted a hit."

It was at Barwell Court that Marillion would compose that first hit. Fish remembers being in the TV room when he heard Rothery messing around with the riff that eventually became *Kayleigh*. "That riff originally came from me demonstrating to the woman that is now my wife how I wrote songs," says Rothery. "I filed it away, and from such a little thing, our mortgage is now paid."

Initially, *Kayleigh* was regarded as just another chapter in the *Misplaced Childhood* story. Nobody thought of it as a potential single. Fish's bandmates also had reservations about the title and lyrics. The problem was that his recently ex-girlfriend Kay's middle name was Lee, and her father's pet name for her was 'Kay-Lee'. There was no ambiguity about it.

"The band said [adopts blokey English accent], 'Er, that's about Kay. You can't sing that,'" says Fish. "I said, 'Why?' They said ''Cos it's too personal.'"

"I was the main one that objected," recalls Kelly. "Kay had been Fish's girlfriend ever since I joined the band. But they'd split up now, and I said, 'No, we shouldn't call it *Kayleigh*.' And Fish said [adopts gruff Scottish accent]: 'What do you want me to call it? May-be?'"

"I was a little bit uneasy about it," adds Steve Rothery. "I knew Kay well and she was a lovely person. But I saw the song as Fish's tribute to Kay... and how he threw away what they had."

Either way, Fish refused to change the lyrics, which he has since claimed are about more than one of his ex-girlfriends. *Kayleigh* was staying put.

In the meantime, Marillion went back on the road for a pre-Christmas tour in November 1984. Their setlist now included most of the first side of *Misplaced Childhood*. "*Kayleigh* wasn't completely finished yet, though," says Fish, "and if you listen to bootlegs from that tour, you can hear me ad-libbing."

Marillion demoed their new material at Bray film studios in Berkshire before heading to Berlin's Hansa Ton Studio in March '85. Chris Kimsey had just produced Killing Joke's *Night Time* album and its hit single *Love Like Blood* at Hansa. "It was also cheap," says Mark Kelly, "which made sense if the record company were thinking about dropping us."

Nevertheless, there were worst places to make an album than Berlin. It was, says the keyboard player, "like the Wild West". Or, as Fish puts it, "a playground for adults".

Before reunification in 1990, West Berlin didn't officially belong to the Federal Republic Of Germany. This meant its young male residents didn't have to do national service as they would elsewhere in the country. Rothery says: "So it was full of young people, musicians and artists. There was a unique feeling about the place."

MARK WILKINSON

Above and right: two shots from the *Kayleigh* video shoot in Berlin.

Hansa Studios was in a converted town hall, and was steeped in history. The main ballroom, Der Meistersaal, had been used by the Nazis to hold propaganda concerts during World War II. It was at Hansa that Bowie had recorded his 'Berlin trilogy' of albums, *Low*, *"Heroes"* and *Lodger*, in the 70s.

> "I floated off into my own anal world and was a bit of an asshole."
>
> **Fish**

Kimsey moved into a rented apartment in the suburbs. The band (Fish, Kelly, Rothery, bassist Pete Trewavas and drummer Ian Mosley) moved into the Hervis Hotel, which overlooked the Berlin Wall. Each morning the band were greeted by the sight of barbed wire, graffiti and sentry towers.

Initially, there were teething problems in the studio. The Neve mixing desk on which Kimsey was working had been damaged when Killing Joke set off a dry powder fire extinguisher over it a few months earlier. "It was noisy and knackered," recalls Rothery. "In the first few weeks, everything we heard at the playbacks sounded very ordinary."

Kimsey recalls Ian Mosley protesting that his drums "didn't sound expensive enough". Rothery says: "Once Chris

EQ'd [equalised] everything, we were fine. But we had a real crisis of confidence to start with."

That said, Kimsey's assistant, engineer Thomas Steimler, soon had the band on side after demonstrating his great hustling skills. "Thomas phoned up [Austrian piano maker] Bösendorfer and told them there was a very famous English rock band in the studio and could they please send us a piano," recalls Kelly. Soon after, a Bösendorfer Concert Grand arrived at Hansa and was carried up a flight of stairs to be delivered to the not-that-famous English rock band.

With their sound problems resolved and a new piano to play with, the band and their producer fell into a comfortable working pattern. "Start late afternoon," says Steve Rothery. "Work till the evening, dinner, go out with Kimsey, drink a lot, come back to the studio and try and do some more work."

'Try' being the optimum word. To achieve the exact sound he wanted, Kimsey recorded one vocal after persuading Fish to stick his head inside the "plastic igloo" surrounding the studio payphone. Fish, meanwhile, now mutters darkly about an "unidentified presence" in the studio while the band were playing the *Perimeter Walk* section of *Blind Curve* late one night. "The room where we were had once been an SS officer's club," he says. "I am convinced something else was there besides us. I sensed another presence."

Then again, Berlin offered so many distractions, it wasn't unusual for some band members to find themselves

The Berlin Wall, which was on the way to the studio.

working while in a heightened state. "The city didn't wake up until midnight," says Kimsey. "If we had a day off, we'd go clubbing and all arrange to meet at the Cri Du Chat, a club that only opened at six in the morning."

Tequila became the tipple of choice, consumed in such quantities that Rothery recalls some of the band and their entourage passing out during a late-night screening of Fritz Lang's silent movie classic *Metropolis*: "It didn't help that the subtitles, naturally, were in German."

Chris Kimsey also became a victim of a boozy prank. While driving through Berlin, Marillion persuaded Thomas Steimler to crash his Volvo into Kimsey's rental car, just for the hell of it. "Chris was in this Honda Jazz," divulges Kelly, "and Thomas rammed straight into him at a set of traffic lights. And then we spent the next 20 minutes ramming into him, until the car was making the most awful noise and we had to ditch it... Isn't it strange how when you're 22, 23 years old, you think you'll never end up getting into trouble – and somehow we didn't."

"Oh, I could fill a book with stories about Berlin," says Fish. "But you'll have to wait for the book."

Key moments include the vocalist's "first and last heroin experience", stripping naked in a restaurant, and throwing bricks over the Berlin Wall to try to set off the landmines. "It was fun," he says. "In Berlin, nobody knew who we were and we could do anything we liked. And I sampled it all."

EMI wanted *Lady Nina*, which was not part of the *Misplaced* concept, to be a single. It was eventually released in the US in 1986.

> "Out of all the albums we've done, there are a few I would rather not listen to again. *Misplaced Childhood* isn't one of them. It still stands up today."
>
> **Mark Kelly**

So much hard work and fun was had that three months after starting work at Hansa, Rothery claims that Marillion had all "aged about five years". In the meantime, EMI were asking about singles.

"EMI were gonna get what they got," says Fish emphatically. "They gave us no guidance whatsoever. They sent A&R guys down to listen, but we'd just shove them in a room, get them pissed and give them a couple of doobies."

"One guy got so pissed he fell asleep during the playback," laughs Kelly. "But at the end of it, he said, 'Is that all you got?'"

The only other new song they had was *Lady Nina*, which had nothing to do with the concept. "We played him that, and he said, 'Oh, that'll be the single,' Kelly adds. "And we said, 'No.' So he went back to the UK, convinced there were no singles."

Marillion were aware they had to release *something*, and finally agreed on *Kayleigh*, with *Lady Nina* on the flip. "But *Kayleigh* was seen as the best of a bad bunch," says Kelly. "Nobody believed it was going to be a hit."

According to Chris Kimsey, the single was first mixed at Abbey Road and the master sent to Berlin for approval. Kimsey took the tape back to his apartment. "And it sounded awful," he sighs. "There was one of those 80s ghetto blasters in the kitchen. I put the tape in and lay there with my head between the speakers, making notes on how I could improve it. Then I went to the studio the next day and put it all into practice. I insisted that we mixed the whole album in Berlin."

EMI also needed a video to go with the single. In a wonderful twist, the promo for *Kayleigh*, a song about Fish's ex-girlfriend, would star German model Tamara Nowy, the woman who would later become his first wife.

Fish had met Tamara on a night out in Berlin and was looking for an excuse to spend more time with her. However, the rest of Marillion vetoed the idea of having her in the video and chose two other models instead. One broke her ankle and the other contracted food poisoning just before the shoot. "So it was a case of, 'Wanna be in a video, love?'" Fish chuckles.

As well as shots of the couple mooching around Berlin, gazing longingly at each other, the promo featured 10-year-old Robert Mead, the 'drummer boy' in designer Mark Wilkinson's *Misplaced Childhood* cover art. The image was, says Fish, inspired by another supernatural encounter: "Kay used to live in Earls Court and there was a staircase leading up to her flat, and she thought she glimpsed a young boy there one night, just a presence."

Steve Rothery and Mark Kelly at Hansa Studios.

Breakfast of Champions: Mark Kelly enjoying cornflakes at Barwell Court.

Chris Kimsey gets into the zone.

Growing up, Fish was fascinated by military history, and the drummer boy's uniform would be adapted for his next stage costume: "Mine was rather tight though," says Fish, "'cos they didn't do military jackets in double XL sizes."

Released on April 7, 1985, *Kayleigh* changed Marillion's lives forever. For the first time, one of their singles was played on daytime radio, and heard by people other than those who bought *Sounds* and listened to Radio One's Friday Rock Show.

It wasn't hard to fathom *Kayleigh*'s appeal over Marillion's previous singles *Assassing* or *Punch And Judy*: it was a universal love song. Better still, says Kimsey, "Steve's opening guitar riff sounded so good on the radio."

But it was Marillion's *Wogan* performance that really sealed the deal. "Before that, we held the record for being the band who did *Top Of The Pops* the most times and saw their single go *down* the charts," says Rothery. "With *Kayleigh*, we were flown back from Europe on a Learjet just to play on *Top Of The Pops*."

Inevitably, the question everyone wanted answered, though, was: who is *Kayleigh*? "*The Sun* went looking for her," recalls Kelly. "But Kay was a very private person so we all had to keep quiet."

"Some people in the band partied too hard."

Steve Rothery

Misplaced Childhood was released on June 17 and compounded the single's success, eventually reaching No.1. Within a year it had sold 1.5 million copies and gone platinum. "And journalists who'd said we were a bunch of Genesis copyists suddenly went, 'Oh, this is a happening band," adds Fish.

Listening to *Misplaced Childhood* now, Fish's rather portentous narration on album opener *Pseudo Silk Kimono* and the *Brief Encounter* section of *Bitter Suite* sound like a hangover from the earlier albums, and, however much they resent the 'Genesis copyist' tag, there are still familiar echoes all over the record. But ultimately, Marillion had streamlined their sound and become more accessible. As Fish admits, "I'd started to move away from that forced falsetto. I was finding my real voice."

Furthermore, this wasn't the woolly, Tolkien-esque Marillion of *Grendel 'and his mossy home beneath the stagnant mere.'* For the most part, *Misplaced Childhood* addressed real life and real emotions. It was a bigger hit than

previous albums *Fugazi* and *Script For A Jester's Tear* because it spoke to more people.

Despite their earlier misgivings, *Kayleigh* was followed by second Top 5 hit, *Lavender*, in September. A third single, the Burns Night-meets-rock anthem *Heart Of Lothian*, followed two months later.

Marillion spent most of 1985 and '86 on tour, playing the new album in full every night. In America, they opened for Rush and were confronted by "a sea of people going, 'What the fuck is this?'" laughs Fish. In Britain, it was a different story. On stage, Fish performed without his usual face make-up, as if he was showing his true self. The mainstream music press and daily papers now flocked to talk to Marillion's outspoken Scottish frontman. "And it rocked the band," he says. "Because so much of the focus was now on me and I was the one with the biggest profile."

"Fish seemed to want that more and more," says Rothery, who admits that Marillion's brush with "proper fame" made him uncomfortable: "I didn't like that feeling of never being able to relax."

Fish, however, had no such misgivings: "When I was a teenager dreaming about being in a rock band," he says, "this was how I imagined it would be."

"Fish craved that celebrity," concurs the guitarist, "and that was part of the conflict that eventually developed between us. He loved a drink and he loved to party. And some people in the band partied too hard."

By the time Marillion started work on a follow-up album, the cracks were showing. *Clutching At Straws*, released in 1987, would be Fish's last with the band. Making it was not a happy experience. "I had a lot to deal with on a personal and professional level, including my ego," he admits. "I floated off into my own anal world and was a bit of an asshole."

Rothery laughs when he hears this. "Listen, I took myself far too seriously at that time too. I was all about the music and the art, *man*." Tellingly, when asked what he thinks of *Misplaced Childhood* now, Rothery says he's proud of it, but that "it represents the calm before the storm".

In 2005, Fish performed *Misplaced Childhood* in full on his *Return To Childhood* tour. To mark its 30th anniversary, he plans to do the same at dates around the country, including the Cropredy Festival in August. But he would have liked to play it one last time with Marillion.

"It would have been lovely," he sighs. "But it's 30 years old, for fuck's sake, so we'd have to drop it down for my voice, and Steve's gone public and said he won't change keys." He pauses, sounding a little exasperated. "But who gives a fuck what key it's in?"

Marillion clearly do, and transposing the songs to suit Fish is not something they're comfortable with. "If he can't sing in the same key as on the album, then we can't play the same music as on the album," says Rothery. "You're not giving people the same experience. It's better to leave them with the memory."

For Fish, though, *Misplaced Childhood* is full of deeply personal memories. On the *Return To Childhood* tour in 2005, the singer met up again with his old flame Kay. "She came to Edinburgh and I gave her a copy of the album, and she wrote back to say that she cried all the way through." He hesitates. "I always said I would never talk about her... But she was a pharmacist who worked at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. We'd been emailing each other back and forth, talking about our kids... and one day she told me she'd been diagnosed. Then she went off the radar."

Not long after, he learned 'Kayleigh' had died of cancer. "Her friends told me that in the later part of her life, she let it be known that the song was about her."

Thirty years on, in 2015, songs from *Misplaced Childhood* still feature in Marillion's set. "Out of all the albums we've done, there are a few I would rather not listen to again," says Kelly. "*Misplaced Childhood* isn't one of them. It still stands up today."

That said, having made more albums with vocalist Steve Hogarth than they did with Fish, Marillion don't dwell as much on the past. Fish, though, is allowing himself one last wallow in nostalgia. "*Misplaced Childhood* was a crucial album for me and Marillion," he says, "and I wouldn't change a thing about it. So I wanted to go out and do it one last time."

By celebrating its 30th birthday, Fish is paying one last tribute to the people and places that inspired *Misplaced Childhood* – and, you suspect, finally closing the door on the past.

"Fancy having a crack at this one, Steve?"

Steve Hogarth on singing songs from *Misplaced Childhood*.

"I'd never heard *Misplaced Childhood* before I joined Marillion. I'd heard *Kayleigh* and *Lavender* on the radio, but that was it. In some ways, I still haven't heard the album. But I have discovered it one track at a time. Every now and again, one of the boys would say, 'Fancy having a crack at this one?' and I'd listen to the track with a view to it going in the live show. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

"There are facets of Fish's songwriting and performance that are very angry, and quite violent. And I'm not an angry and violent performer. I'm capable if it, but I can't summon it up on someone else's behalf. I'm not a performing dog. So there are songs from the Fish era that I can't do.

"At the same time, I think Fish has written some great stuff and *Kayleigh* is a great lyric. Lines like *'dancing in stilettos in the snow'* and *'loving on the floor in Belsize Park'* are obviously about very real things and very real memories. And I can latch on to that. I can feel those feelings. It's got to sit in me like a real thing.

"*Heart Of Lothian* is a bit weird because I'm plainly not from Edinburgh. But I enjoy singing it. We don't do it that often, but we do when we're north of the border, as a mark of respect.

"So when it comes to these songs, my attitude is: if it's honest enough and true enough and not too gothic or angry or drug addled, then I can get in to it... And I can even get into it if it's drug addled, as long as I have the same drugs." **MB**

FUTURE

Three singles from *Misplaced Childhood*. From top: *Kayleigh*, *Lavender*, *Heart Of Lothian*.

Q&A Fish

It's 2016, and Fish is getting ready to wind everything down, planning his last-ever album and mapping out what is billed as his final tour. *Prog* finds the singer in reflective mood, looking back over an illustrious career that's taken in dizzying highs and desperate lows, both with Marillion and as a solo artist - and just where he's headed next.

Words: Paul Elliott **Portraits:** Stuart Wood

The game is over. In these four words, from the title track of Marillion's debut album *Script For A Jester's Tear*, there's now a new meaning for the man who sang them so many years ago. "The boy called Fish" – as he jokingly refers to himself – will turn 60 on April 25, 2018. And when that landmark arrives, he will be finished with the game he has played for more than 30 years, first with Marillion and then as a solo artist: making records and touring with a rock band.

The long goodbye-to-all-that has already begun. This summer, Fish completed his *Farewell To Childhood* tour, in which he performed Marillion's classic concept album *Misplaced Childhood* in its entirety for the last time. And he has the next two years planned out. He has, he says, "one more album in me". The album's title will be *Weltschmerz*, a German phrase translating as 'pain of the world'.

After its release in early 2017, he'll tour with a show featuring both *Weltschmerz* and the last album he made with Marillion, *Clutching At Straws*. And then there'll be a final tour in 2018, after which, he says, "the electric touring band will be rolled up".

What all of this represents for Fish is the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. "I'm not retiring," he says. "But it's time to explore something else – to move into a different area of creativity. There are screenplays I've always wanted to write, and that elusive autobiography. The truth of the matter is that I'm a writer who can sing, rather than a singer who can write."

Whatever the future holds for him beyond 2018, Fish has had a long and distinguished career in music. With Marillion he made four of the greatest progressive rock albums of the 80s. And while his subsequent work has been more erratic, there have been moments of brilliance throughout, from a classic solo debut, *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*, in 1990, to his most recent album, *A Feast Of Consequences*, in 2013 – acclaimed by *Prog* as "one of the most powerful pieces of music released under Fish's name".

It's a career Fish describes, with a dry laugh, as "an interesting journey". Speaking to *Prog* from his home in Haddington, East Lothian – the small town in which he has lived ever since his exit from Marillion in 1988, and a place not far from Dalkeith, where he was born – the big man discusses his life and work with remarkable candour.

He recalls how an introverted teenager named Derek William Dick first fell under the spell of prog. How the success of "the Marills", as he calls them, turned to shit. How fame, booze and drugs turned him into a rock-star arsehole. How he ended up almost a million pounds in debt. And he explains why, in the end, he's happy to leave all of this behind and move on.

"I'd been thinking about it for a long time," he says. "And then, a year or two ago, a friend of mine, a retired solider, said to me in an email: 'You've done enough now. You can leave the battlefield.' And I thought, 'Yeah, maybe this is the time...'"

When did music first become a major part of your life?
I remember singing along to *Hey Jude* when I was at primary school, but it was in high school that I really got into music – Emerson Lake & Palmer, Genesis and the Floyd. Progressive rock was my thing. And because I was the sensitive kid who spent most of his time in an attic room listening to records, I got into the words.

Did you write songs back then?
No. I wrote words. I was good at poetry. I loved books. Always got high marks at English.

Could you play an instrument?
No. I was rubbish at music. At school I played the recorder and I couldn't get a tune from it. When I was 11 I tried guitar. I thought you just picked it up and songs came out. When I realised it needed all this work, I was despondent, in tears. Then my dad bought me an accordion, for fuck's sake! That's when I decided I was never going to be a musician.

But you still fancied yourself as a singer?
I did after I saw Rod Stewart and the Faces on telly. Rod was obviously pissed and having a fantastic time. I thought: "That's something I could do." So that

Marillion at the Marriott Hotel in Amsterdam, November 28, 1987, from left: Fish, Steve Rothery, Mark Kelly, Ian Mosley, Pete Trewavas.

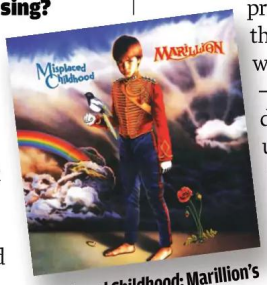
FRANS SCHELLEKENS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Fish shot exclusively for Prog, June 2016, at his home in Haddington.

> My ego got a bit out of control at that time. My hand is up. I was an arsehole.

was my dream, singing along to the mirror in my bedroom.

When did you find the balls to get up on a stage and sing?
I was 21 when I did my first ever gig, at the Golden Lion in Galashiels, singing covers – Steely Dan, Aretha Franklin. That was in 1980. I met up with Diz Minnitt, a bass player. We tried to set up a band up in the Scottish borders. And then, in 1981, we saw an ad in a music paper from a band in Aylesbury that wanted a bassist/singer. The band was Silmarillion. We convinced them to take on a separate bassist and singer, and the rest just fell into place.



Misplaced Childhood: Marillion's 1985 smash hit concept album.

Were you apprehensive about moving south, away from home?
Oh no. It was an opportunity to reinvent myself. In a new place I could be whoever I wanted to be. I'd picked up the name Fish in 1979, and with that name, and the make-up I'd wear on stage, I was able to build up my confidence.

Performing at The Rotterdam Ahoy, during the Clutching at Straws Tour, November 8, 1987.

GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

What did the band sound like before you joined?
I thought they were a lot like Camel. It was also very clear to me that Steve Rothery was a brilliant guitarist. And they had no lyricist. So I said, "I have lyrics..." I already had the idea for *Script For A Jester's Tear*. I was a big fan of The Who, and when Keith Moon died, I wrote a whole set of lyrics on that theme.

At what point did you realise the band had something special?
I knew it from the first rehearsals. It was an incredible feeling, singing your own words with a bunch of guys who all had a similar taste in music. We were all brought up on those 70s progressive bands, but the Genesis influence was the most powerful – the one in the Venn diagram that brought us all together. We talked music all the time, and there was a great energy between us.

By 1982, much had changed. The band's name had been shortened to Marillion. There was a revised line-up, with Mark Kelly on keyboards, and Pete Trewavas replacing Diz Minnitt on bass. And with the band signed to EMI, debut single *Market Square Heroes* was released – featuring, as the B-side, the epic 17-minute track *Grendel*. Was this your attempt to out-prog Genesis?
Not consciously. We just thought: 'Let's write a big, long song, because that's what progressive rock bands do.' But yes, it was very, very Genesis-oriented. Basically, it was *Supper's Ready*. The music came from a song that Silmarillion had, *The Tower*. The lyrics were inspired by John Gardner's book *Grendel*. Steve and I put the song together and it just swung into that *Supper's Ready* thing. It's funny, many years later I spoke to Tony Smith, the manager of Genesis, and he said that if he'd known about *Grendel* way back then, he would have sued us!

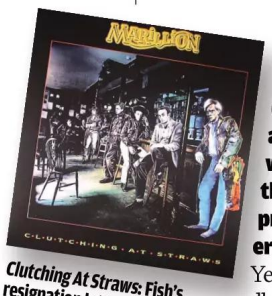
In your defence, Genesis weren't writing songs like *Supper's Ready* in 1982.
No, they were in *Abacab* territory by then. They were in pop world.

Did it hurt when critics branded Marillion a poor man's Genesis?
It used to irritate me at the start. But now, yeah, I can hear it.

What do you hear now in that first Marillion album, *Script For A Jester's Tear*?
I hear somebody singing in very bad keys! Sometimes I don't even recognise the guy who's singing on that album. That high falsetto voice, it was very forced. But I was young. I didn't understand anything about music and keys, and I was singing very high. When I think now of singing like that, six nights in a row... fuck that for a game of soldiers.

Bad singing aside, what else do you hear in that album?
I hear the youth, the naivety and the aspiration in it all. Across that album and the next one, *Fugazi*, you can hear us trying to find our own style. Don't get me wrong, those are two wonderful albums. But I think *Misplaced Childhood* was the marker for us, not just because it was a hit, but also because we found ourselves.

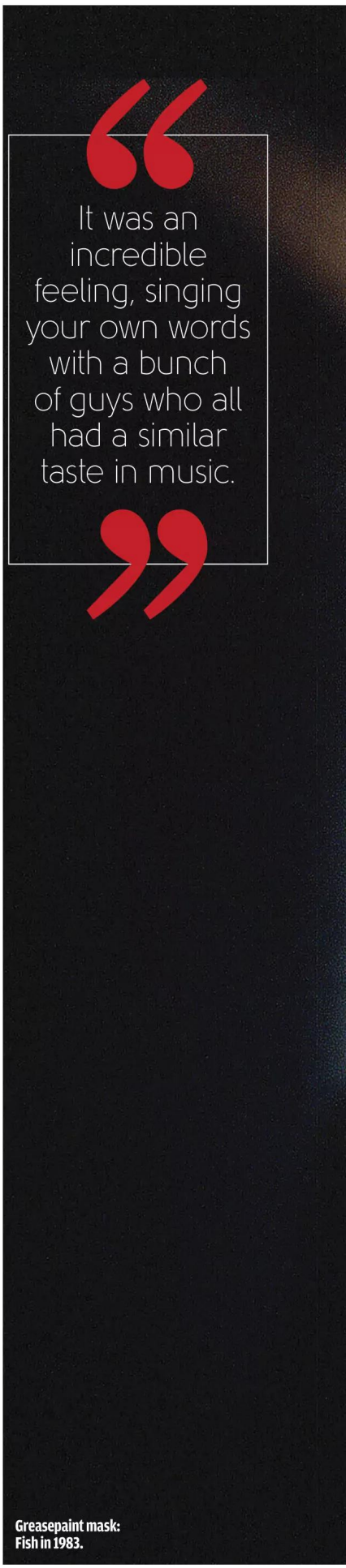
The rise of Marillion in the early 80s was part of a bigger story – a prog revival in which bands such as Pallas, IQ and Twelfth Night also emerged.
We never saw it as a revival. We were just doing our own thing. The media at that time thought they had buried progressive rock in '77. They thought it would never rear its ugly head again. But there were a lot of people out there that wanted to hear that kind of music, and that was the music we wanted to make.

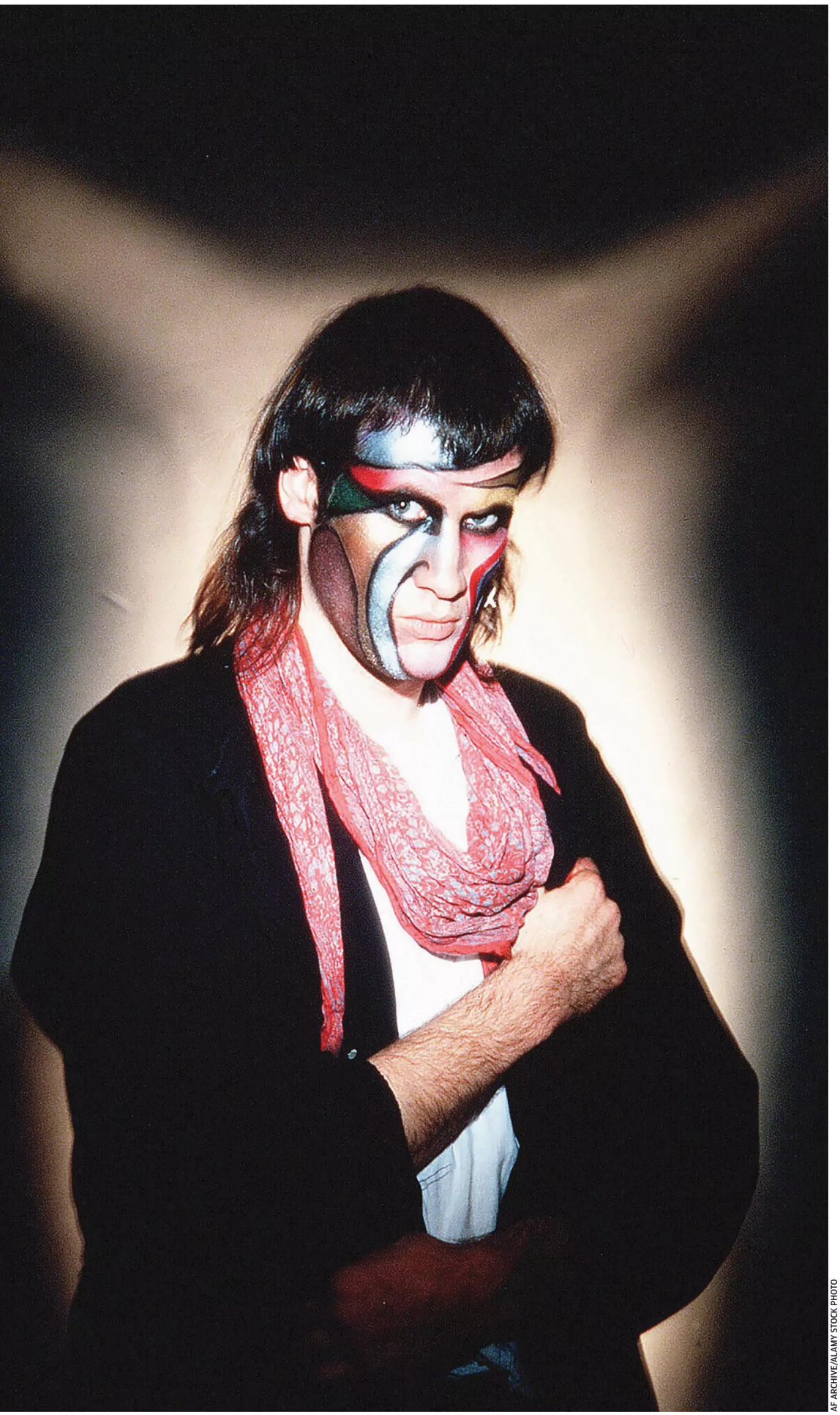


Clutching At Straws: Fish's resignation letter on record.

This much was proved with *Misplaced Childhood*. As a concept album, it was a throwback to the glory days of 70s prog, and yet, in a new era, it was a huge hit.
Yeah! Let's do a concept album in 1985, when everybody is using synths and drum machines! The truth is, it was a make-or-break album. *Fugazi*

> "It was an incredible feeling, singing your own words with a bunch of guys who all had a similar taste in music."


Greasepaint mask: Fish in 1983.



AF ARCHIVE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

did okay, but we were in danger of being dropped by EMI. We looked at *Misplaced Childhood* as the last stand. And then we ended up with these hit singles – doing *Kayleigh* and *Lavender* on *Top Of The Pops*.

These were also, for you, deeply personal songs – *Kayleigh* named, in part, after your former girlfriend Kay.
The whole of that album was an autobiography, in a way. I opened up, and that was when I really found my style as a lyricist. I'd alluded to some personal stuff with the first two albums. *Script...* was all about Kay, written when we were going through one of our many break-ups. But on *Misplaced...* I really found the confidence to express myself. That's why it was a very key album in my career.

Were you concerned that you were revealing too much of your own life in that album?
No. I was happy with that. I think it comes from my Scottish character – a problem shared is a problem halved. That was one of the things in the band that was a bit weird. Everyone else was very English about everything. If people had problems, they didn't talk about it. Whereas when I had something going wrong, I was quite happy to talk about it. It helped me get through things. *Misplaced Childhood* was an album I had to write. But it was a double-edged sword.

Meaning what?
I grew as a singer and a frontman. But at the same time, it was when the gang mentality left the band. The filthy lucre came into play.

Was it fun, for a while, being a pop star?
Yeah. We all dealt with that fame in different ways. And being the frontman, I was running point. The press wanted to talk to the singer. My ego got a bit out of control at that time. My hand is up. I was an arsehole. And also, we had bad management. There was a lot of manipulation, Machiavellian shit, between record company and band and management. That's what led to the lyrics in *Clutching At Straws...*

It's a dark album.
It's actually my favourite album that I did with the band. But

Light and shade: Fish is planning a dark album to sign off his solo career.

yeah, it has a very dark feel. *Hotel Hobbies* has got a real darkness to it, a beautiful darkness. There's pathos in *Sugar Mice*, and also a malevolent anger in songs like *White Russian*.

On *Torch Song* on the album, you adopted the alter ego of an alcoholic romanticising about Jack Kerouac. Was this a sign of madness?
The Torch character was a handy tool. You asked if I ever revealed too much. On *Clutching At Straws*, maybe so. With *Sugar Mice* and *Torch Song*, I think I felt I was overexposed. That's why I invented the Torch character to hide behind. But really, it was just another name for myself.

While you were making that album, was there distance between you and the band?
I just felt alienated. In the studio I was left alone to do my vocals. You want my letter of resignation? It's in that album. Read the lyrics to *That Time Of The Night*: it was exactly how I was feeling then.

Some lines in that song are like a cry for help.
That was my state of mind. I was so unhappy with the band and what it had become. On that tour, there was constant arguing. And we were playing huge gigs, but everybody was still struggling to pay mortgages. I felt that our manager wasn't dealing with our business correctly. He knew I wanted him out. And he told the band: "If I go, you'll be next." That's really what created the crunch scenario: "It's me or him."

When the split came, the band were already working on the next album...
Every time I went to the writing sessions, all they had were bits of music; no songs. There was a traditional blackboard – which they still use, by the way – and all the sections were written on it, with arrows where they would join up the sections. I said, "I can't write over this – I need to have some sort of structure." Bob Ezrin was supposed to be producing that album. He came to band rehearsals to hear what we'd got, and afterwards he said, "These are not songs." I was sitting there with a wry smile on my face. And after Bob walked out of the room, the first thing the guys said was, "Let's try joining this bit to this bit." I just went, "Fuck this," and walked out of the room. A week later, I quit.

And you did actually write that letter of resignation.
I've still got that letter. I wrote it at my cousin's house in Gerrards Cross. I was alone there one night. I drank a bottle of Jim Beam and I was still standing. And a little voice went off in the back of my head: "You're gonna kill yourself." I realised I was in a very dangerous area. And so, in the morning, I hand-wrote this three-page letter.

Did you cry while writing it?
No – I was angry. I made photocopies and sent them round in a taxi, dropped off at every one of their houses. The next day I get a letter from the manager saying they don't require my services any more.

What then?
I had to get out of London before the story broke so I went straight up to Berwick to my mum and dad's place. One night I got pissed with my mates – ironically, in the pub where I'd written *Warm Wet Circles* [from *Clutching At Straws*]. The next morning I had a particularly vicious hangover, and my mum brought me a copy of the *Scottish Sun* newspaper. When I saw the front page it was like one of those things you get in funfairs – your face with a headline like 'Man Of The Year' or something. I thought it was a joke, but no. Here was this story about how I was an alcoholic and a drug addict, and that's why the band wanted rid of me. It made out that I'd been fired. I was fucking fuming.

Fish's debut solo album, *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*.

At the time, it was widely reported that one of the reasons you left the band was because you and keyboardist Mark Kelly hated each other.
Not true. Mark and I are still pretty close friends, and we've talked about this on many

occasions, after we've had a couple of bottles. The whole situation was very complicated. There were a lot of underlying issues – financial stuff. It was never about just Mark and I.

Do you regret how it turned out?
It was sad. And I think if I'd been more business-savvy I'd have stayed on, done the album and tour, and signed a massive publishing deal. But in the end, my sense of honesty and integrity prevailed. I had to get the fuck out of there.

After you left the band, there was a lot of bad blood between you and them.
We got into a very ugly and clichéd public divorce. It wasn't pleasant. I felt there was a lot of shit thrown about at that time, and stupidly I reacted to it.

Marillion's album *Seasons End* – their first with Steve Hogarth on vocals – was released in late 1989, four months ahead of your solo debut *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*.
EMI wanted the Marillion album to come first, so I was on hold. That really pissed me off. What EMI wanted was Phil Collins and Genesis. They knew it would be tough for Marillion to bounce back with a new singer – tougher, allegedly, than it would be for the boy called Fish...

Starting out as a solo artist, did you feel lonely?
I felt lonelier on the *Clutching At Straws* tour. When I went solo, I had Mickey Simmonds as a foil, a great character. I created a new gang. I also had some great songs for my first album that I'd written for Marillion – songs like *Vigil*, which they didn't like, and *Big Wedge*, which they felt was too anti-American for a band that was trying to break America.

At what point did you cut down on the booze and drugs?
1988, when I left the band. With drugs, there was a conscious clean-up. I just said, "I don't need this shit." But, honestly, the drinking was never a problem.

That's not what you said earlier.
I was never out of control, swigging a bottle of brandy for breakfast. When the situation with the band got really bad, I wouldn't say I was hiding in a bottle, but I took my solace in a bottle. Put it this way: when I left the band, the tabloids were offering about 12 grand for a photo of me pissed, and they couldn't find one. So I never had a problem. I never went to a clinic to dry out.

Why did you decide to go back to Scotland to live?
Up here it was much easier to focus. And I wanted to be as independent as possible. I bought this farmhouse, and in 1991 I had one of the outbuildings converted into a studio. But that year was a killer...

Why was that?
Legal stuff. With the settlement of the Marillion case, and the

> When the situation with the band got really bad, I wouldn't say I was hiding in a bottle, but I took my solace in a bottle.

settlement of the EMI case after I signed to Polydor, the legal bills were something like four hundred grand. That was nearly bullet-in-the-head time. I don't mean suicide. I mean I was nearly taken out financially.

Added to that, your solo records weren't hits.
No. *Internal Exile*, the first album for Polydor, didn't sell, and with that I lost my self-confidence. I did the covers album, *Songs From The Mirror*, which was very much the coyote chewing off his foot to get out of the trap. After that, a lot of fans switched off. And the cost of building the studio, another three hundred grand, really put me behind the eight ball.

How bad did it get?
It got to the point where the zeros didn't matter. In 2001, when my wife left me, I was about nine hundred grand down. A lot of that was interest from the bank. I sold the house and moved into the studio. The financial thing was a guillotine hanging over my head for years and years. But in the middle of all that shite, I managed to pull some great albums out of the hat...

Albums from that period – such as *Sunsets On Empire* (1997) and *Fellini Days* (2001) – have now been reissued in deluxe editions.
Yeah. Those albums went missing, but they've stood the test of time. I hope now that people might rediscover them.

Fish's latest, highly acclaimed album, A Feast Of Consequences.

You also had great reviews for your most recent album, *A Feast Of Consequences*.
I really enjoyed making that album. The *High Wood* suite was particularly inspiring and got me into a flow.

And next... *Weltschmerz*.
I look on this as a very dark album to finish off with. It will have a similar feel to *Clutching At Straws*.

You're going to get back on the gear, are you?
[Laughs] No fucking way. Heart attack? No thanks!

So where does the darkness in this album come from?
All you have to do is switch on the news and you think, "Where the fuck are we going?" And that seeps down on a personal level. I have a daughter who's 25, and my partner has three kids, 19, 18 and 13. Watching their interaction with the world, I'm finding the crystals in which *Weltschmerz* is born – the state this planet is in; not in a political sense, but in a soulful sense.

As you think about this, your final album, and the final tour to come in two years' time, do you feel sad at letting go of this part of your life?
No. I'm done. When I was that boy looking into the mirror, the dream was to be a singer in a rock'n'roll band. The current dream is I'd love to write and direct my own movie. And acting, too – I'd like to do more. I've done film and TV stuff over the years. The highlight for me was playing a nutter in an asylum in *The Jacket* [2005]. I did one scene with Kris Kristofferson and Daniel Craig. I got such a kick from that. Who knows what's in the future? But I won't be doing action movies – my knees and my back are too fucked.

After all these years, does it still feel strange to think that Marillion was once your band?
No. That was a long time ago. When people talk about reunions, it's kind of disrespectful, because Steve Hogarth has been in that band for a lot longer than I was.

Have you and him ever talked about that?
Yeah. He and I are fine. The thing we both have to deal with is the fact that the biggest albums the band made were the first four. They've never had – and I've never had – the success that we attained up to '88.

And the most famous of those albums, *Misplaced Childhood*, is now consigned to your history. The Farewell To Childhood tour must have been emotional.
There were moments when I had a lump in my throat: moments when I was singing about Kay, and about Mylo – our friend John Mylett, the drummer from Rage, who died so young. When *Kayleigh* was a hit, the *Daily Mirror* had this story: who is the girl behind the song? And I swore to Kay that I would never tell. But in 2006, she and I got back in contact. She told me then that she had cancer. And in the last year of her life, she told everyone that she was the girl in the song and that Fish was her boyfriend. So yeah, there were times on that tour when the emotions were so high, you couldn't help but cry.

Will there be more tears when you take your final bow?
I don't really know how I'll feel. But I doubt there'll be dry eyes at the end.

Turned out nice again: Airbrush king Mark Wilkinson's original poster art for the Garden Party.

ALL PICTURES: PRESS

Welcome to the Garden Party

1986 was a momentous year for **Marillion**. Not content with touring around the world with the likes of Rush and Queen they topped it all off with their own massive show at Milton Keynes Bowl. Keyboardist **Mark Kelly** recalls to **Phillip Wilding** the day Marillion held their Garden Party.

Marillion in 1986: (*l-r*) Steve Rothery, Pete Trevwas, Ian Mosley, Fish, Mark Kelly.

By any band's standards, 1986 was a pivotal year for Marillion. Tours of the US with Rush, stadium shows across Europe with Queen and then a summer hurrah all their own; a headline show at Milton Keynes Bowl, named, in part, after the early single that helped cement their reputation; *The Garden Party*.

"That was an incredible year, if you think about it," says Marillion's long-standing keyboard player, Mark Kelly. It's Monday lunchtime after a European tour celebrating their acclaimed *Happiness Is The Road* double albums, but Kelly's already back in their Racket studios preparing for the band's upcoming and ever popular convention weekenders in the Netherlands and Montreal.

"There was Milton Keynes in June", he continues, "and before that we'd done our own shows in the US as well as playing with Rush. We'd first supported them in 1983 at Radio City in New York, but the audience hated us. I remember one audience member pulling his trousers down and shouting 'kiss my ass'! That had never happened before – or since! Then they offered us that tour in '86 and we played *Misplaced Childhood* from beginning to end so no one could boo.

"Rush treated us very well though, as did Queen. We went out with them after the show at the Bowl, through July and August. They were really nice, they even invited us to Brian May's 40th, that's how long ago that was. We had some really good parties with Queen, they were so accessible. They invited us to dinner in Paris and we'd got there early as we were nervous and Freddie made a real entrance. He was first through the door and he was wearing this canary yellow military outfit. He said, 'Come on, Mr Fish, you sit next to me!'. It was such a good tour, Fish sang with Queen one night and Brian got up and played with us too. It was a nice crossover."

> "We wanted to show people – the media – how big we'd become." – Mark Kelly

Bowled over: Milton Keynes in its aerial splendour.

PRESS X2

June 28, 1986, and the sun was shining brightly over England. Flags fluttered in the breeze as Marillion decamped in rural Buckinghamshire for the biggest gig of their career. The week before had seen the venue filled with Simple Minds fans enjoying another band at their commercial zenith and though Marillion had played there three years before as support for Status Quo, Milton Keynes Bowl was still something of an anomaly on the festival circuit.

"Yeah, there'd been a few shows there, but I'm sure a lot of our fans didn't even know where it was." says Kelly, "I remember the idea came about through our then manager, he thought we were big enough to do it and we liked the idea that it wasn't so far from Aylesbury where it had all began. There was also this idea that we wanted to show people how big the band had become. I think it's fair to say that the media didn't treat us very well, I think it genuinely upset some journalists who'd written us off as 70s throwbacks that we then started having these hits. It wasn't even a backlash against us; it wasn't even that spirited, they just sort of ignored us."

For your £12 in advance, or £13 on the day, you got Marillion and a full-supporting bill that featured, in descending order, Gary Moore, Jethro Tull, Magnum and Mama's Boys.

"I remember there was an argument over the way the show ran." says Kelly, "We'd agreed to pay Jethro Tull £50k to do the show and I think Gary Moore wanted £35k, but he wanted to be higher up the bill. So Ian Anderson said that as long as he got more money than Moore he didn't care where he went on. I remember being pleased that Magnum were on there too as they'd kind of come through at the same time as us, they'd done the *Friday Rock Show* when we did it, that sort of thing. And it was a beautiful day, just fantastic, which you can never guarantee on a June afternoon in England. We had that jousting theme, didn't we? The circus and big top thing going on and there was new artwork all around the stage done by Mark Wilkinson.

"It wasn't completely sold out though, I remember that much, we did between 40,000 and 50,000 and I think it holds around 60,000. It looked pretty good from the stage, though as a business exercise I don't think we made that much money. Ian Anderson walked away with more cash than we did. I remember that I had a big row with my wife that night at the party and stormed off to bed early in a right mood. So I ended up missing our own party! I came

down in the morning and people were still up. Maybe I should have cited that incident in my divorce? It had been a great day, an awful lot of fun up until then."

The band started the evening with *Garden Party*, naturally enough, and then did the set that had seen them through their headlining arena tour of Europe leading up to Milton Keynes. They ended the set with now familiar *Margaret* and some surprise covers.

"The set was pretty much the show we'd been playing on the *Misplaced Childhood* dates," says Kelly. "That tour itself went on for about 13 months and we were just knackered by the end of it. We were in Japan and we got offered dates in Australia and we'd never played there. We were already halfway there; never seen the country and we just said no, we're going home. And we've never been offered it since…

"We used to play *Margaret* at the end, it was just the weakest stab at some kind of Scottish music we could manage. It started back in the old days as after our set we'd just want to get people up and dancing, because, let's be honest, we don't make music you can dance to. Fish couldn't play anything so he'd start singing the words to something that would happen to occur to him and we'd try and stay with him and it was pretty much almost always awful. So at Milton Keynes we were just doing more of the same and then we ended up doing *She Loves You* and *Let's Twist Again*, you'd probably have to know the words to have recognised them."

Though a feature on the festival circuit, especially in the days when the Marquee Club booked the Reading Festival, Marillion are less a feature outdoors these days, especially in the UK.

"We were always popular at the festivals, that's the way we came up," agrees Kelly. "I loved those festivals too, I like the challenge of a new audience, but we don't get asked to do them anymore. We tried to get on the Glastonbury bill and Michael Eavis said, 'Don't they swear a lot? I don't want them on the bill!'. The only one who used to swear was Fish!

"Early on in our career we used to get asked to stop playing, they'd pay us and ask us to leave. We'd get there, a gay bar in Coventry for example, and start playing and they'd stop us, give us 50 quid and send us home. You could see people glance up and go 'what the fuck?'. To be fair, at the time, Fish had the face paint, was dressed a bit like a vicar and was wearing no shoes. I remember doing Reading one year and this big flagon came flying through the air towards us, filled with piss, no top on it and Steve didn't even see it. It just went right by him toward the back of the stage and bounced between all his guitars, didn't touch one, and rolled off the stage, he didn't even notice!"

Marillion may be more familiar as convention and theatre headliners these days, but the keyboard player's memories are unencumbered by bitterness or regret. On the contrary, looking back makes him laugh.

"I've got a friend who's quite high up in the police force, it transpires that before I knew him he was at Milton Keynes working undercover as part of the drug squad and he ended up using his police badge to get backstage," he says. "And even though he saw people doing whatever he didn't nick them as he was a fan and having too much fun! That's your tax pounds in action.

"We had these confetti cannons out front too, and in the backstage area we'd set up this outdoor bar where all the liggers were. We put a cannon back there too so that when we were on stage and set them off, all the people who'd come and didn't even bother to watch us got covered in confetti. I remember walking backstage and there were all these people just covered in bits of paper, all this stuff in their hair. Some of them were still coming up to congratulate us on the show…"

Catch of the day: Fish calls out to the edgy eggs and the queuing cumbers.

MIKE CAMERON/GETTY

Reflections of a time gone by

Prog editor Jerry Ewing casts his mind back to a balmy June day in 1986

You'd think that trying to recall the events of a concert you attended almost a quarter of a century ago would be beyond the realms of capability for a seasoned hack with literally hundreds of gigs under their belt. And perhaps had I started my journalistic endeavours in 1986, then Marillion's Garden Party might have become the blurry non-event some more recent events have. But back in '86 I was still at University and an eager paying punter when I and a bunch of Marilli-friends made our pilgrimage to Milton Keynes.

To be honest, not every band stands out and I don't believe we gave openers Mama's Boys much time. Not so Magnum however, who were riding high on the back of 1985's *On A Storyteller's Night* and had recently signed to Polydor for 1986's *Vigilante*. However the band were felled on the day by a poor sound, rendering the likes of *Lets Morts Dansant*, *When The World Comes Down* and *Vigilante* less effective than they might have been.

Jethro Tull kindly added a fledgling Marillion to the bill of their 1982 Nostell Priory show that also featured Ralph McTell and Lindisfarne. Now it was the turn of the new headliners to repay the favour. With Tull out of their *Under Wraps* malaise, but still pre-*Crest Of A Knave* Grammy glory, it was a set of golden moments with *Pussy Willow* from *Broadsword & The Beast* going down a storm.

Gary Moore seemed to stick out like a sore thumb. This was, however, the days when Moore would play his catchy brand of hard rock and not the interminable blues he's obsessed with today. It was a fun hour but nothing could detract from what was going to follow.

Marillion, of course, chose to open with *Garden Party*, which immediately got the entire place clapping as Fish, resplendent in a fetching black and white combo, led from the front. On the sartorial front, I believe this was also the era of a slim-line Steve Rothery taking to the stage in leather trousers !

There was little let-up from the band as they ploughed through *Freaks* and *Assassing* before easing into *Chelsea Monday* with Fish quipping something rude, the banter between the towering frontman and devoted audience reaching new heights. We got an entire rendition of *Misplaced Childhood* as well, which remains perhaps the most poignant memory. That and, with a day's ale dulling the senses somewhat, an over-zealous dash to the front of the stage for the encore of *Market Square Heroes* (what else?).

I've probably seen better Marillion shows to be honest. But this was all the band's own handiwork. Their own special day. And one to remember, even after all these years.

THE LAST Straw

In 1987, **Marillion** released their final Fish-fronted album - and it was a tumultuous journey for all involved. From the influence of alcohol to incessant touring schedules and the final bitter split, this is the inside story of *Clutching At Straws*.

Words: Dave Everley **Photos:** Steve Rothery

The Freilichtbühne Loreley is one of the world's great venues. Perched high on the Loreley, a 400-foot rock overlooking the Rhine Gorge in Western Germany, this open-air amphitheatre was originally built by the Nazis as a Thingplatz – a showcase venue for the Third Reich to stage displays of propaganda thinly disguised as drama.

Other, older myths surround the Loreley. According to local folklore, it was the home of a siren who would draw passing ships onto the rocks more than 400 feet below. This macabre legend has been referenced in music by everyone from German composer Felix Mendelssohn to Wishbone Ash.

On July 18, 1987, Marillion arrived at the Loreley to play one of the biggest headlining shows of their career yet. It was two years since the release

"The unity of the band seemed to have gone..." Steve Rothery wasn't wrong. Fish (left) and Pete Trewavas in 1988 as the band began to fall apart.

"We weren't getting on, and by the time we got to the tour it was intolerable. The tour bus was not a good place to be. We all sat in different positions, nobody saying anything. The gang mentality had broken up."

Fish

of *Misplaced Childhood*, the album that turned this unfashionable prog band into the unlikeliest pop stars of the decade.

But success had brought unforeseen issues. The demands of constant touring were taking their toll, and the gang mentality that originally fuelled them was fracturing. This turbulence was captured on the band's most recent album, *Clutching At Straws*, a snapshot of a band struggling to keep their heads above water. In its central character, Torch, frontman Fish laid his own inner turmoil bare.

The 20,000 fans gathered at Loreley to see them might not have been aware, but Marillion were under a dark cloud. Behind the scenes, the band had split into two camps: Fish on one side, the rest of his bandmates on the other.

"Things were very miserable," says guitarist Steve Rothery today. "If you watch the *Live From Loreley* video, you can see the mood. The unity had gone. You can blame many things, you can point the finger at people who were hanging round and aggravating the problem, whispering in ears. But whatever the reason, it reached critical mass. There was something fundamentally wrong with how things were."

Their career wasn't dashed on the rocks at Loreley, but they were listing badly. Within 18 months, the Fish era had come crashing to an acrimonious end, leaving the wreckage of broken friendships in its wake. At the heart of it all was *Clutching At Straws* – Marillion's dark masterpiece.

"*Clutching At Straws* is a brilliant album," says Fish. "I prefer it to *Misplaced Childhood*. It's very honest, very open, to the point where you go, 'Fucking hell...'"

"I feel less warm towards that album than I do *Misplaced Childhood*," says keyboard player Mark Kelly. "But I know some people really like it."

"It's a strange album, *Clutching*," says Rothery. "It's a very powerful album in that it's got some of our best work. But you can also see the fracture lines."

The retrospective view of their fourth album is one of the few things the men who made it disagree on – remarkable, given the circumstances that surrounded it and the eventual outcome. On most other points, they're in surprising accordance, albeit with markedly different individual perspectives. Certainly, all five members put the root of their problems down to the incessant touring schedule imposed on them by their manager, John Arnison.

"Just when you thought it was coming to an end, there'd be another fucking series of gigs," says Fish. "We were squeezing the pips dry on *Misplaced*. It was like being at the circus. It's all fucking singing and dancing, but when you walk outside the tent, it's scabby animals and shite. I was physically and mentally exhausted a lot of the time."

"I think Fish probably felt the pressure more than anyone else," says bassist Peter Trewavas. "If you're the person everybody wants to talk to, then the demands on your time are so great. Maybe we could have been a bit more understanding about that. But when things are happening, it's like a fairground ride."

The singer admits that he was partying hard, partly as a release from the seemingly endless grind. His exploits were seized on with glee by the press, who liked their rock stars larger than life and, preferably, always ready with an open wallet.

"There were a lot of shadowy people around us and a lot of fucking drugs on offer, let's be open and honest about it," says Fish. "People go out on tour, they get tired and worn down, they need something to pep them up for the show. Then suddenly you've finished the show and you're still getting pepped up. You're in an eternal overdraft of energy."

It was this hedonistic lifestyle that prompted the singer to create the character who sat at the centre of *Clutching At Straws*. Torch was supposedly a writer suffering from writer's block, an older, more disillusioned version of the Jester from Marillion's earlier album. At 29, he was the same age as the man who conceived him. It didn't take a psychologist to work out that Torch, like the Jester and the kid from *Misplaced Childhood*, was essentially Fish himself.

"I created the Torch character as a kind of alter ego," he admits. "I think it was to disguise some of the excess in the lyrics that I was talking about. Because I felt guilty."

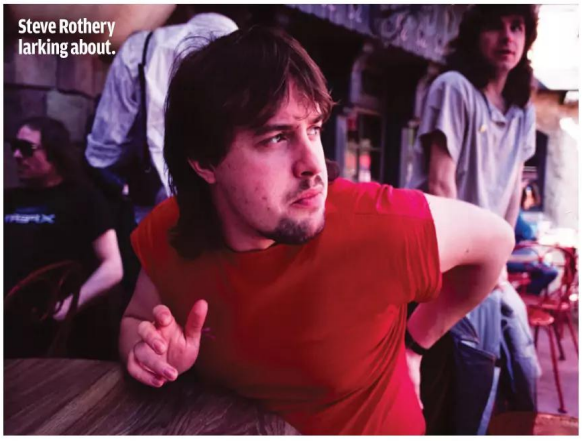
The band needed a holiday, but the break that could have eased their situation and reset increasingly strained relationships never materialised. Instead, the band were bundled back into the studio to record a follow-up to *Misplaced Childhood*. EMI wanted another hit album in short order.

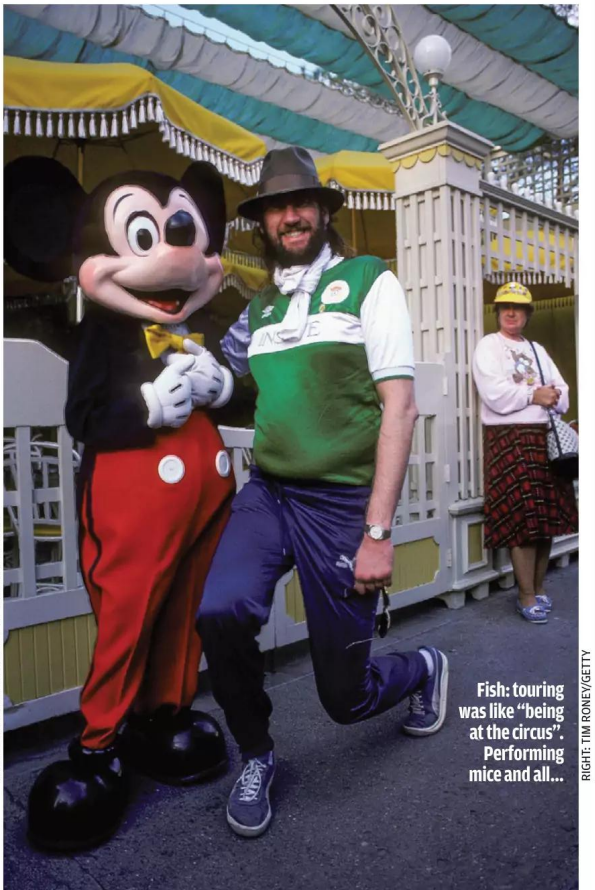
"The touring really did take it out of us," says drummer Ian Mosley. "Then reality hit us when it came down to writing another album. You've got a blank canvas in front of you and the record company is going, 'Is it ready yet?'"

"Now we were in the Premier League the label didn't want us to turn into fucking Leicester City," says Fish.

The band began sketching out rough ideas for their fourth album at Steve Rothery's house in Wendover. Peter Trewavas remembers sketching out

Warm Wet Circles: it wasn't all tough times...


Steve Rothery larking about.


Fish: touring was like "being at the circus". Performing mice and all...

MARILLION PRESS COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

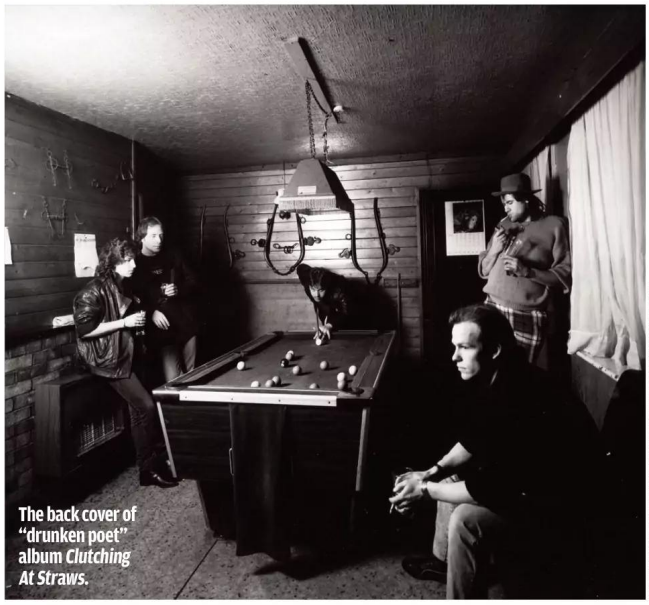
RIGHT: TIM RONEY/GETTY

Fish: just a swift one.

"Let's be honest and open about it: there were a lot of shadowy people around us and a lot of fucking drugs on offer."

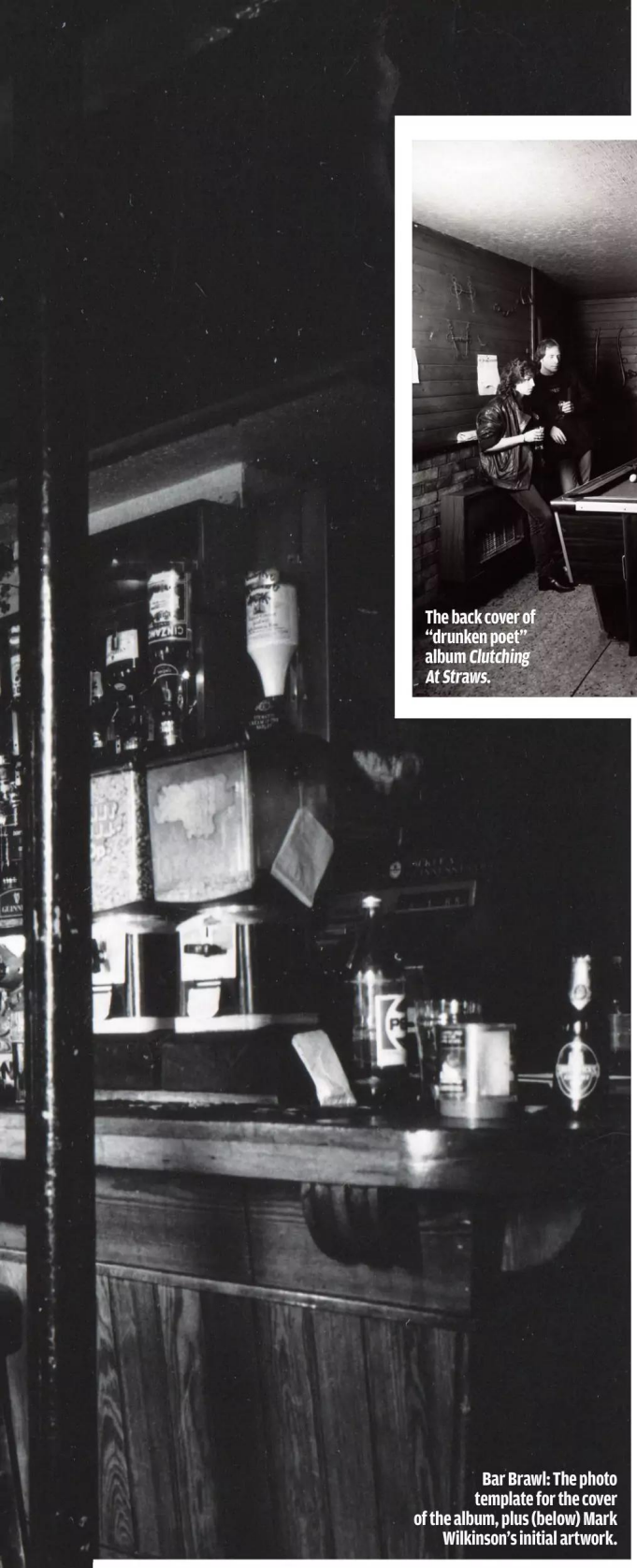
Fish

"It's a strange album, *Clutching*. It's a very powerful album in that it's got some of our best work. But you can also see the fracture lines."
Steve Rothery



The back cover of "drunken poet" album *Clutching At Straws*.

COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON AND JANUS VAN HELFTEREN



Bar Brawl: The photo template for the cover of the album, plus (below) Mark Wilkinson's initial artwork.

the beginnings of opening track *Hotel Hobbies* – "the soundscapey bit" he says – before the label paid for the band to decamp at a rehearsal studio between London and Brighton.

"They wanted to get us away from the clubs and bars and dark influences," says Fish. "Everybody went down there, we were going to be good little boys and concentrate on writing an album. And it was just awful. People were getting tetchy."

Marillion's traditional approach to songwriting involved building up segments of songs which they would then find a way of piecing together like a jigsaw. Or, in Fish's words, "Trying to put them together with a hammer."

"It was a bit like *Misplaced Childhood Part 2*," agrees Steve Rothery. "We were trying to stick all these tracks together that didn't really belong together. We had to step back a bit and re-evaluate what we were doing."

This much became clear when Chris Kimsey, who had produced *Misplaced Childhood* and would work on the new album, arrived with the band's A&R man, Hugh Stanley-Clarke, to hear what the band had written. The pair were unimpressed.

"They were, like, 'Is that all you've managed to come up with?'" says Fish. "Chris said, 'I don't hear any fucking singles in there.'"

There was one song that did stand out. It had emerged from one of the band's sporadic post-pub jam sessions and was powered by a catchy Mark Kelly keyboard riff ("What we called 'The widdly-widdly synth stuff,'" he says). The song would eventually be titled *Incommunicado*. But, according to Fish, the rest of the band were dismissive of it.

"I always loved The Who, and I wanted to do more rocky stuff, but the band were not into the idea," says Fish. "And they were not into *Incommunicado*. But we played it to Chris Kimsey and he said, 'That's it – that's the single.' I was really chuffed. I felt like I got a backing for what I wanted to do."

This split in opinion over *Incommunicado* didn't augur well for Marillion's future. It wasn't the only point of difference either. Steve Rothery had brought in a song he'd been working on that the band thought had a lot of potential. Fish supplied a set of vivid lyrics inspired by observations he'd had while drinking one night in a pub near his parents' house in North Berwick. The song was titled *Warm Wet Circles*. But not everyone was impressed.

"I liked the music, but I hated the fact that it was called *Warm Wet Circles*," says Mark Kelly. "We weren't chasing hit singles, but if you want to kill a song stone dead, call it *Warm Wet Circles*. Fish's attitude was a bit like, 'Fuck you, I'm going to do what I want.'"

> "I created the Torch character as a kind of alter ego. I think it was to disguise some of the excess in the lyrics that I was talking about. Because I felt guilty."
>
> **Fish**

Musically, Marillion had largely jettisoned the more traditional prog elements of their sound. The ornate musicality of *Grendel* and *The Web* was a distant memory, replaced by a more mature approach that wouldn't upset the daytime radio listeners who had bought *Kayleigh* in their droves. But lyrically, *Clutching At Straws* disappeared down an altogether bleaker rabbit hole.

"It's a lot less optimistic an album," says guitarist Steve Rothery. "Some of it symbolises Fish's disillusionment – he wanted success and he got success, but it didn't bring him the personal happiness that I think he expected it to."

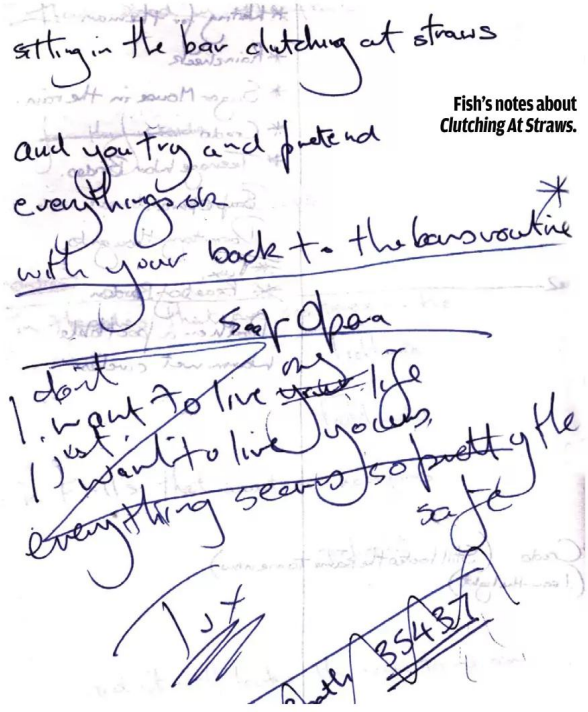
Together Yet Apart: it became Fish versus Marillion.

MARILLION PRESS COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

"It's a 'drunken poet' album," says Fish. "That's why the cover featured Burns and Kerouac and Truman Capote. All those people were people who had a strong association with alcohol."

Booze soaked deep into the pores of *Clutching At Straws*, from the whisky-and-shattered-dreams anthem *Slàinte Mhath* (a Scottish drinking toast) to *Torch Song*, in which a doctor solemnly intones that if the titular character doesn't stop drinking, he "won't reach 30". The latter referenced Beat author Jack Kerouac's famous quote: "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow Roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"

"It felt like, 'Oh, I've got an alcohol problem, I take too many drugs, look at me, I'm a rock star, I've got problems,'" says Kelly. "It was all a bit clichéd and childish. It was over-dramatic, that whole, 'Carry on like this, you won't reach 30' thing. He did carry on and he's still with us now."



Fish's notes about *Clutching At Straws*.

The album's title certainly laid bare the record's over-arching themes, referencing both alcohol and cocaine use, as well as the fact that the band were, in Fish's words, "Desperate to make a big album." The problem was that the band simply weren't getting on. One song, *That Time Of The Night*, found Fish's frustrations bubbling to the surface.

"It was my resignation statement: 'So if you ask me where do I go from here, my next destination even isn't really that clear,'" he says. "Somebody had brought some coke down to the studio and I ended up doing a couple of lines, and then suddenly I was in a bedroom, there was no alcohol, and I couldn't sleep. I actually wrote most of that lyric that night. I just felt really alienated."

"It seemed to be that the thing Fish used to love doing, he started to hate," says Rothery. "He was looking for people to blame."

The powderkeg finally exploded towards the end of the sessions. An argument flared up which ended with Fish throwing a whiskey tumbler at the guitarist.

"*Clutching At Straws* is a brilliant album. I prefer it to *Misplaced Childhood*. It's very honest, very open, to the point where you go, 'Fucking hell...'"

Fish

"I stormed out and that was it," says Rothery, who says his relationship with the singer had been deteriorating since the time of *Misplaced Childhood*. "I was out of the band for 24 hours. But I wasn't really close to Fish at that point. It's unfortunate, because on a personal level we had an amazing chemistry together, but that friendship seemed to gradually dissolve."

After some hastily arranged talks to clear the air, the band pulled themselves back from the brink of self-destruction, at least temporarily, but the die had been cast.

If *Misplaced Childhood* has ended on a note of defiant positivity, by *Clutching At Straws* all that had gone. It was the hunched figure with red-rimmed eyes sat glowering in the corner of every pub, trying to drink off last night's hangover.

But it was a strangely romantic album too, one that wore its neurosis and self-pity like a badge. Occasionally, as on the chillingly prescient *White Russian* – inspired by the election of Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, despite rumours of Nazi involvement during World War II – it looked up from its half-empty glass and gazed outwards to the world at large, only to recoil at what it saw.

Musically, it was Marillion's most accomplished and mature album yet. The sharp edges of their first three albums had been smoothed away, replaced by a sound that ebbed and flowed between triumph and introspection. They may still have worked by hammering together jigsaw pieces, but the likes of *Warm Wet Circles* and the tender *Sugar Mice* – inspired, as the opening lines suggest, by a day stuck in a depressing Holiday Inn in Milwaukee while the rain poured down outside – pointed towards the band's post-Fish future.

Clutching At Straws was released in June 1987, and peaked at No.2 on the UK album charts – one place below *Misplaced Childhood*, which had reached the top spot. The champagne corks popped, though any celebrations were soured by the mood within the band.

"We weren't getting on, and by the time we got to the tour it was intolerable," says Fish. "The tour bus was not a good place to be. We all sat in different positions, nobody saying anything. The gang mentality had broken up."

Except it hadn't, not quite. The band was certainly fracturing, but on one side was the singer and on the other was everybody else.

"I remember avoiding Fish on tour," says Kelly. "He was in 24/7 party mode. He'd say, 'Come on, let's go out.' You'd go out, but he wouldn't want you to leave. He'd make you feel like a terrible bastard for wanting to go to bed at 3am."

***Clutching At Straws*-era Marillion: the cracks were already beginning to show.**

MARILLION PRESS COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

I said, 'Either fundamental changes are made within the management and we get rid of John Arnison or I'm leaving.' The next thing, I get a phone call saying, 'The band have decided to accept your resignation.'"

Fish

From the outside, it looked like the band were flying. The first single from the album, *Incommunicado*, had reached the Top 10, while *Sugar Mice* and *Warm Wet Circles* reached the Top 40. They were playing arenas across Europe. But being a member of Marillion in 1987 through 1988 was a lonely place to be.

"I was going onstage every night and feeling like I was playing by myself," says Kelly. "I was up on this big riser away from everybody, and Ian was on this big riser across the stage. You become separated from everything. At one point, Pete said, 'I think I saw somebody up in the lighting truss during the show.' The manager said, 'Yeah, you've got 10 people up

there, operating things.'"

"We were in a bit of a bubble," adds Trewavas. "We couldn't go anywhere without security. We had to check into hotels under pseudonyms. We couldn't just go and do a soundcheck. It had to be: 'So-and-so is going to pick you up at this time, then you're going to drive around to the back of the building, that's going to take about 40 minutes.' Everything was being over-thought."

"It was just fucking draining," says Fish. "We were playing these concrete halls in Italy with shite sound, and I'd just had enough. You've got to remember, I'm going out there every night singing about how shite it is being out on the road. There was a kind of feedback loop going on. If I was singing fucking ABBA songs, it would have felt a lot better."

Above: Fish was at his wits' end...

Everyone involved says that the problem could have been relieved if they'd been allowed to have a break from touring – and from each other. But their management was determined to keep them on the road, to the detriment of the band itself.

"These were people who had been great friends of mine," says Fish. "We were comrades. But we were so distant from each other. John Arnison should have said, 'Everybody, go away for a year – Fish, go and do some acting, Steve, go and write some soundtrack music.'"

In June 1988, a year after *Clutching At Straws* was released, Marillion played the Radrennbahn Weissensee cycling track in East Berlin in front of 95,000 people. It should have been a triumph, but things had reached the point of no return.

"The gig was incredible," says Ian Mosley. "But we came offstage and people were saying, 'I didn't really enjoy that.' That's when alarm bells went off: 'If you didn't enjoy that, then something is very wrong...'"

A month later, the band headlined Fife Aid, a poorly attended charity gig at Craigtoun Country Park in St Andrews organised by TV naturalist David Bellamy. It was, Steve Rothery recalls, "A fairly dismal day all round." They didn't know it at the time – though they may have sensed it – but it would be Fish's last gig with Marillion.

"Things had started going properly wrong at the end of the *Clutching At Straws* tour," says Trewavas. "After that, there was a kind of reluctance to get together and work."

There was a last-ditch attempt to salvage things. The band began working on new material in Trewavas' garage, before eventually decamping to Dalnaglar Castle, a stately pile in Perthshire which was miles away from civilisation.

"That was a terrible mistake," says Kelly. "Not only were we not getting on, we didn't really want to be together, and we had nowhere to go."

"We went back to the same routine," says Fish. "It was the same bits going up on the fucking blackboard: this is the Joni Mitchell section, this is the Floyd section. There we were again, in the same shit."

A gulf had opened up between what the band wanted and what the singer wanted, and neither side were ready to compromise. "I don't know if he thought we weren't giving his ideas much of a try," says Trewavas. "But then some of his lyrics weren't quite what we wanted to work on, either."

The music the band recorded in Dalnaglar, and during an earlier session in Nettlebed, near Reading, wouldn't go to waste, with some of it ending up on the first two post-Fish albums *Season's End* and *Holidays In Eden*. Similarly, the singer's lyrics would re-appear on his own debut solo album, *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*, and the title track of its follow-up, *Internal Exile*. But, as the bassist puts it: "Something had to give." They wouldn't have long to wait before it did.

Bob Ezrin had been scoped out to

> "Nowadays, we're absolutely fine. We all get on pretty well. I still consider them friends."
> **Fish**

produce Marillion's next album. The American, who had worked on such landmark records Lou Reed's *Berlin*, Kiss' *Destroyer* and Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, flew to the UK to meet the band.

"Bob came down to meet the band in some studio in Surrey," says Fish. "He said, 'OK, play me what you've got.' And the band played all the bits and pieces they had. And Bob said, 'There are no songs here. These are just bits.' After Bob left, the band started going, 'Alright, let's try joining this bit onto this bit.' And I just went, 'This is a waste of fucking time. I can't deal with it.'"

The singer headed to his cousin's house in Wiltshire. "I drunk a 40-fluid-oz bottle of Jim Beam on my fucking own, and I was still standing, because I was so stressed and tense."

He woke up the next morning with a clear head and made a decision that would change his life and alter the course of the band. "I wrote a five-page letter, got it photocopied at a local office suppliers and paid for a taxi driver to deliver it to everybody else's house. I basically said, 'Either fundamental changes are made within the management and we get rid of John Arnison or I'm leaving.' The next thing, I get a phone call from management saying, 'The band have decided to accept your resignation.'"

"Fish said he wanted 50 per cent of all the publishing and all the writing," says Mosley. "That's when it got out of hand. Everybody said, 'This has gone too far.'"

This is where memories diverge. Mark Kelly says that Fish spoke to the band's manager a few days later, suggesting that he might have made a hasty decision, something Fish refutes. But whatever happened, the outcome *was* irrefutable: Fish was no longer a member of Marillion.

Speaking separately to the rest of the band today, they all use the same word to describe the emotions they went through in the aftermath of Fish's departure: relief.

"Because things had got so difficult," says Rothery. "Fish had never really had anything to do with the writing of the music. So we knew that our musical identity was still there. We had a lot of great ideas. Maybe, slightly naïvely, we thought it would be just a case of finding someone to replace him. As if it was ever going to be that easy."

"Fish's departure was, 'OK, this is part of the process,'" says Peter Trewavas. "Don't get me wrong – it was a big thing, and we had to fill a big hole. It took us a long time to do that."

The split was bitter and nasty. Barbs were exchanged in the press, and there was a debilitating court case between the two sides. It would be a decade before they began speaking again, by which time by Fish was deep into his solo career and Marillion had reinvented themselves with their new singer, Steve Hogarth.

"We did go through a very public and very angry divorce," says Fish. "Nowadays, we're absolutely fine. We all get on pretty well. I still consider them friends. But to be blunt and honest about it, neither party has ever reached the commercial success we had in the 80s. But I don't miss it. I'm much happier with my lot these days."

Thirty years on, *Clutching At Straws* stands as a strangely fitting epitaph to Marillion's best-known 80s line-up in all its fractious, boozy glory. The great 'what ifs' that surround it – what if Fish had stayed, what if they'd made another album together – are the source of many a drunken argument. But in the end it's all hypothetical. Like Kerouac's Roman candle, the Fish-era line-up of Marillion was always going to fizzle out. *Slàinte Mhath*, as they say north of the border.

HAPPY ENDING?

How Marillion found another frontman.

How do you replace a singer like Fish? That was the question facing Marillion following the big man's departure at the end of 1988. And it was a long and involved process that nearly drove them to distraction.

"Even though the mood in the band had lifted, we knew it wasn't going to be easy getting someone in who was right for the band," recalls Mark Kelly. "Fish was a unique frontman."

The process of finding a new singer would take months. Ian Mosley remembers the band being inundated with tapes from hopefuls.

"I used to drive to our rehearsal studio from my house, and I'd play these cassettes as I drove," he says. "And I'd be going, 'No,' and I'd chuck the tape in the back seat. There was a pile of them."

The band had all manner of applicants from across the musical spectrum, from heavy metal vocalists to Fish soundalikes. "That's one thing we absolutely didn't want," says Kelly. "We wanted to move forwards rather than backwards."

While the band understandably put live shows on the backburner until they found a new frontman, they weren't completely gig-shy. In November 1988, they played a fan convention in Utrecht, Holland, where Peter Trewavas stepped up to the microphone.

"It wasn't so much singing as conducting the crowd," he said. "I mean, I love singing, but apart from anything else, if you're replacing a singer like Fish, you want to have a presence onstage, and I didn't think I was it. Somebody hiding behind an instrument wasn't going to have the effect that would be needed. So no, it was never going to be full time."

A month later the band played another fanclub gig, this time at the Royal Court Theatre in Liverpool. On this occasion, the vocalist was Dave Lloyd, formerly with Scouse rockers Nutz and Rage, whose late drummer John Mylett would be commemorated in the *Milo* section on *Misplaced Childhood*'s *Blind Curve*. "We knew the Marillion guys because Rage shared a manager, John Arnison," says Lloyd today. "We played with them a few times and got to know them well."

Lloyd sang six songs with the band: *Incommunicado*, *Kayleigh*, *Lavender*, *Heart Of Lothian*, *Garden Party* and *Market Square Heroes*. While the prospect of a bluesy singer like Lloyd joining Marillion full time is certainly intriguing on paper, today he says that there was little chance of it happening.

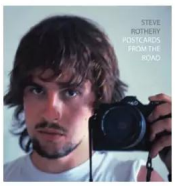
"If they wanted me to sing with them, nobody told me," he says. "I was just helping them out. In all honesty, I don't think my voice would have suited what they were doing."

And so the search for a new singer continued. The band auditioned a number of people, but none of them fitted the bill. "There was a point where we thought, 'Will we ever find somebody?'" admits Kelly.

The tapes began piling dispiritingly up in the back of Mosley's car, until one day he popped a cassette in the deck. It was by a band called How We Live.

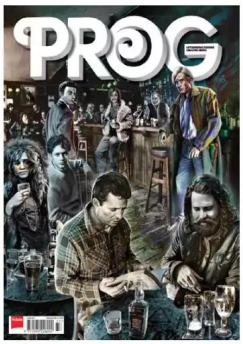
"It was this really striking voice," says the drummer. "Some guy named Steve Hogarth. I got to the studio and said, 'Guys, I think you might want to listen to this.' So we did, and we all know what happened next..." **DEV**

New Kid On The Block: Steve Hogarth (left) with Mark Kelly.



Above: the intimate band-on-tour photos in this feature are taken from Steve Rothery's *Postcards From The Road*. See www.marillion.com for more information and to order the book.

JUST FOR THE RECORD...



Mark Wilkinson discusses creating the artwork for *Clutching At Straws*, and how he reimagined it for the cover of *Prog*...

Words: Dave Everley **Images:** Mark Wilkinson

"*Clutching At Straws* was not one of my best efforts back in the day, it has to be said. There were mitigating circumstances, mostly due to time. Far too much of it at the beginning, as the band were unsure about how this cover was to be approached or even if I would be doing it, and we all seemed to drift for ages. The enthusiasm at the meetings about previous album art was sadly absent. This was a dark album in all sorts of ways, everyone at the time could sense it. The cover needed to reflect that somehow. It certainly was my darkest hour as an artist!

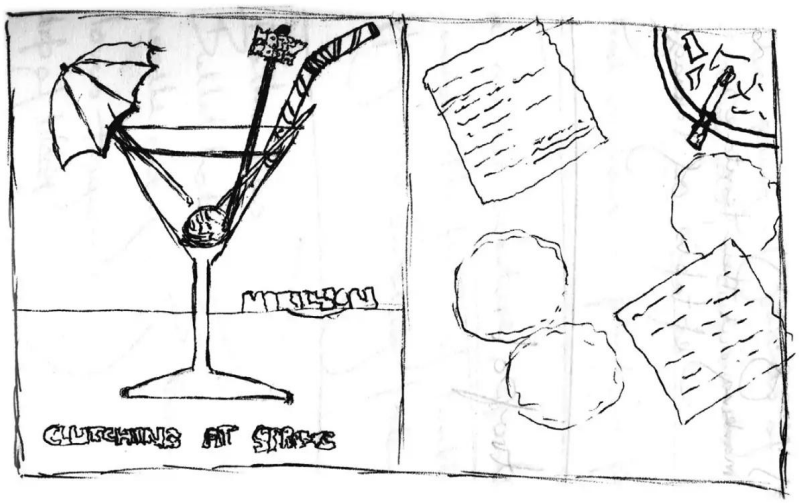
Initially, Fish provided me with a doodle based on a cocktail glass with planet Earth skewered instead of a cherry. But I don't think the rest of the band went for it, so a meeting was set up at EMI to explore other ideas. We discussed featuring a bar. To accentuate the different stylistic approach to previous albums which was important to them, I suggested a collage, mixing photography and painting. The next time we met, I brought along Janus Van Helfteren, a photographer I knew. The basis of this cover art would be a black and white photo of a dingy, spit and sawdust bar, which would certainly look different to the brightly coloured trilogy of album covers that preceded *Clutching*. I proposed having the drinkers airbrushed as realistically as possible on paper, then cut out and pasted on to this photo. I had got the idea from a book I really liked by artist Guy Peellaert who had airbrushed the cover for Bowie's *Diamond Dogs*. He had created mixed media collages with the rock elite painted on top very effectively for *Rock Dreams* – an illustrated history of the first 30 years or so of rock'n'roll.

Fish suggested a brotherhood of poets, artists, writers, comedians and rockers to populate the bar. Various names were put in the hat: John Lennon, Robert Burns, Truman Capote, Lenny Bruce, Dylan Thomas, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Tony Hancock and most importantly, Jack Kerouac. It was a quote from his seminal book *On The Road* that inspired Fish when he wrote this album: "...the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow Roman candles..."

Later, while I was trying to piece all this together, the band's manager rang me with something else to consider: a black angel.

I saw in Torch, the silvery-haired guy at the end of the bar, a possibility – an antihero to embody some of the album's lyrical themes, like an alcoholic's guardian angel.

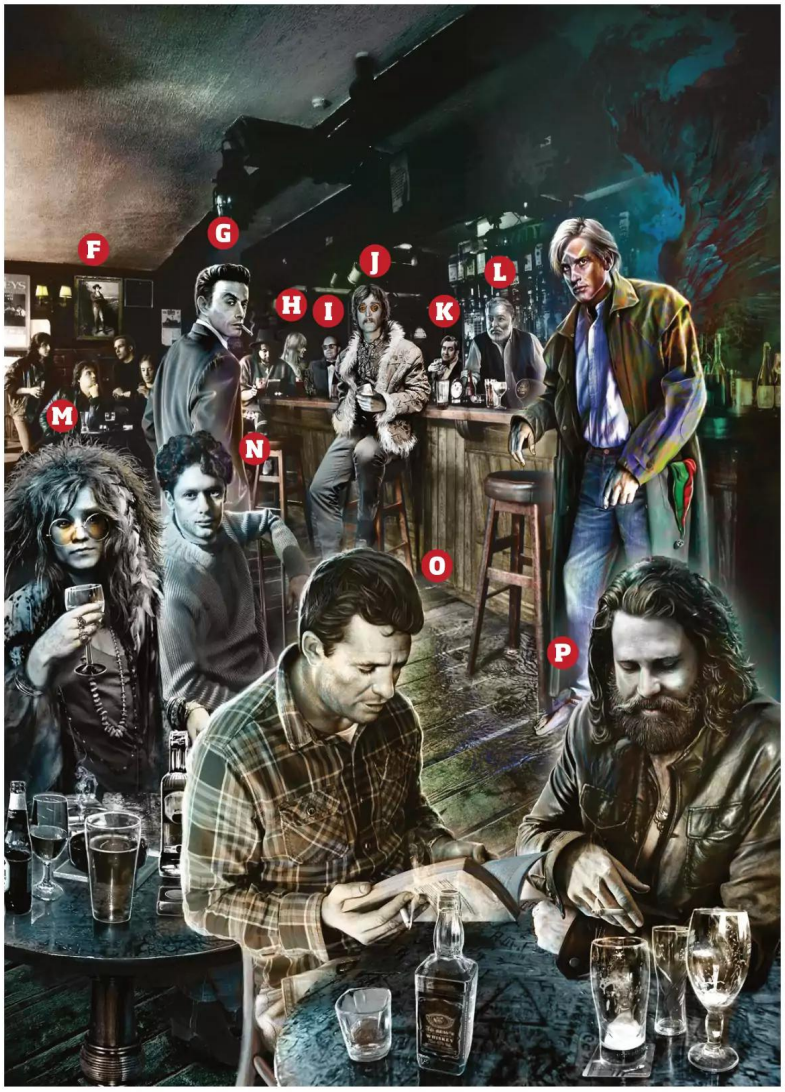
We set up a photo session in Colchester at The Bakers Arms, which was most definitely a pub of 'character', with afternoon lock-ins, one of which we took over, with some of the bemused local drinkers looking on. Trouble was, it was quite a small place, so plonking all those people on Fish's list inside would be... challenging. Janus and I sat the band at the back,



Left: the initial sketch of Torch for the new cover and (right) Fish's original rejected album cover sketch.

The Booze Brothers

Who's who on Mark Wilkinson's updated *Clutching At Straws* sleeve...



A - Robert Burns
Unofficial national poet of Scotland, died in the 18th century. Wrote the words to *Auld Lang Syne*.

B - Dylan Thomas
Welsh poet and professional hellraiser. Reportedly died after drinking 18 straight whiskeys.

C - Truman Capote
American author, playwright and wit. Died of liver disease in 1984.

D - Lenny Bruce
Trailblazing comedian. Died of a heroin overdose in 1966.

E - Torch
Central character of *Clutching At Straws* and Fish's alter ego.

F - Robert Burns

G - Lenny Bruce

H - Marianne Faithfull
60s wild-child and paramour of Mick Jagger. Still alive and active.

I - Truman Capote

J - John Lennon
Beatles star and music icon. Murdered at the age of 40 by assassin Mark Chapman.

K - Tony Hancock
Troubled 60s comic genius. Committed suicide in 1968.

L - Ernest Hemingway
American novelist and larger-than-life adventurer. Shot himself in 1961.

M - Janis Joplin
Leather-lunged blues singer who rocked Woodstock. Overdosed in 1970 at the age of 27.

N - Dylan Thomas

O - Jack Kerouac
Author of Beat classic *On The Road*. Drank himself to death at 47.

P - Jim Morrison
Late leather-trousered Doors singer and notorious drug-induced hellraiser.

leaving empty stools, chairs and tables dotted about for me to collage the drinkers in place later. That was my plan, and it was a good one. It should've been relatively simple.

The double whammy here was the complex nature of the brief escalating every week, with Torch changing from angel to being weirdly garbed, barefoot in a long coat with the jester's hat in his pocket as a nod to the past! More characters were suggested, more detail to consider yet the timing was drastically cut short to accommodate an upcoming tour to promote the album. I had the manager and record company calling me on a daily basis for a progress report, warning me that if I was late with delivery, the album would be put back, cocking up their schedule. It made for a very uncomfortable ride as we'd all taken far too long discussing what this cover should look like that I had run out of time to make it actually work! My frustration is all too evident in the finished album art.

Below: the initial sketch for the 'black angel'.

I used the futurist Russian poet and playwright Vladimir Mayakovsky as my model for Torch for no other reason than I liked his thousand-yard stare! I have no idea what was going on with that coat of his or the jeans; I think something was mentioned to me about having his clothes wet, appearing out of pools of water, and that his coat should reflect the outside world. In any event, Torch was rendered too quickly and looked awkward. I did my best with the limited time I had, but must accept responsibility for not project managing this far more effectively and saying no once in a while.

Prog asked me if I would consider reworking *Clutching At Straws* for the 30th anniversary, to finally make some sort of sense of it. What could possibly go wrong!? That forced perspective in the original bar photo was damned tricky then to overlay the figures, and that problem remains. I've had to play around with the laws of perspective a bit. I've knocked the three black pillars out of the bar, which in reality means the ceiling would cave in, but who cares? I've got all the characters in this time, plus a few others. Torch is better realised; I hated the crude way he was done before. It's closer in spirit to what I think this album was all about.

In my opinion the chapter of my time working with Marillion is now closed in a more satisfying way."

"This was a magnificent but very dark album in all sorts of ways, everyone at the time could sense it."

Mark Wilkinson

Q&A Mark Kelly

To the world at large, he's Marillion's keyboard player and second-longest serving member. To his bandmates he's marathon-running 'Mad Jack'. Now the self-confessed "electronics nerd" looks back on the highs and lows of his career, from accidentally pioneering the crowdfunding revolution to surviving a near-fatal run-in with a German cement mixer truck ...

Words: Dave Everley **Portrait:** Kevin Nixon

Some rock stars prematurely exit this world in a bath tub with a needle sticking out of their arm. For others it could be something as instant as a car crash or lingering as an incurable disease that finishes them off. For Mark Kelly, it was a German cement mixer truck that nearly did for him.

It was 2017, and Marillion's keyboard player was on his way back to the band's hotel in Frankfurt after a pre-gig run when he crossed a busy road junction. He'd spotted a bus coming from his left, and thought he could make it across in time. Unfortunately, he hadn't noticed the cement mixer coming in the opposite direction.

"So I started running across the road," he says today. "Which is when I saw this truck bearing down on me. The driver had seen me and was braking, but he couldn't stop in time and I couldn't stop in time, and I ran into the side of it as it went past."

Kelly found himself sprawled in the road. Realising there was a bus bearing down on him from the other direction, he hastily picked himself up and staggered to the side of the road. "That's when I thought, 'Uh-oh, I think I need to sit down,'" he says. "And then the bloody truck driver got out and started shouting at me in Polish or something: "English! Why? Why? Why?'"

Had the cement mixer prevailed, Marillion would have been robbed of its second longest-serving member, a man who joined the band in 1981 and who has helped define their ever-evolving sound down the years. It was Kelly, too, who helped pull the band back from the brink of extinction during the wilderness years of the late 90s, pioneering the crowdfunding model that so many bands have subsequently picked up and run with.

"I like to try and push the band to do new things," says Kelly.

Kelly with Marillion in 1983 (interim drummer Andy Ward, right)

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

"Like the crowdfunding idea: I was thinking, "What can we do that's different this time?' I'm more of a risk-taker than the rest of them. My nickname is Mad Jack. Even though I'm not so mad these days, I still like a bit of excitement."

You were an electronics student. Were you the nerdy kid building his own keyboards at 15?

That was me. I was sat in my bedroom with a soldering iron and a keyboard, trying to combine my interest in electronics and music into one thing. It suited me perfectly to play keyboards. Funnily enough, when Fish asked me to join Marillion, I went to my tutor at college and said, "I want to go and join a rock band, can I come back in a year's time and carry on if it doesn't work out?" And he just shook his head and went, "I think you're mad, but yeah, okay." He's still waiting for me to come back.

What was your first paying gig as a keyboard player?

Before Marillion, I was in a band called Chemical Alice. We used to play in the Chadwell Heath/Romford area in Essex, and we got paid – not much, but we got paid. We used to cram in 300 or 400 people into our gigs.

What did Chemical Alice sound like?

It was a cross between Pink Floyd and Hawkwind. Definitely the cosmic rock, druggy end of things. But my leanings were more towards the Yes/Pink Floyd/Genesis end of things, whereas the guitarist and the bass player were definitely more into Hawkwind, Gong, Daevid Allen. But that was how I ended up meeting Marillion, because they were our support band.

What did you make of Marillion the first time you saw them?

I was struck by the charisma and stage presence that Fish had,

> The reason I left my old band was to get away from the drug-taking thing. Of course, the first evening I spent with Fish, he was on acid.

even back then. He had bare feet and a priest's cassock and all that face paint – it was quite a different thing from everything else was going on in the pubs at that time. I thought, "Bloody hell, these are good."

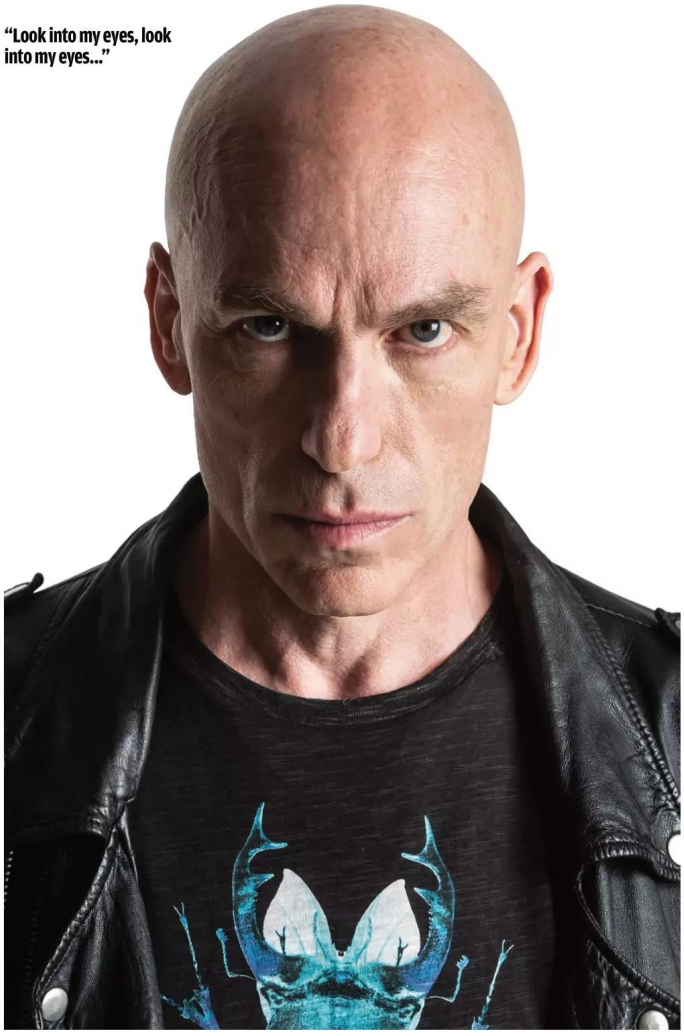
I went to see them again about a week later in Chesham. Fish invited me back to his little cottage. We sat and listened to music and chatted all night long. I found out afterwards that he was on acid, which I didn't know at the time. Which is funny, because the whole reason I wanted to leave Chemical Alice was because the whole drug taking thing was just a bit too much for me. I thought it would be nice to get away from all that and join a bunch of professionals. Of course, the first evening I spend with the lead singer, he's on acid.

What was the band like in those early days? Was it a gang of friends, or were personalities starting to assert themselves even then?

I thought it was a gang of friends to start with, but very quickly I realised that there was a lot of rivalry between Fish and Mick [Pointer, founder and original drummer]. There was a rift there that I wasn't aware of at first. Fish was one of those people that you could very quickly become very friendly with him, but then he was quite demanding in terms of how much he expected you to have a good time with him and party and all the rest of it. That got old really quickly.

When did you think, "Hang on, we're really onto something as a band here"?

I always loved going in the studio, right from the very first time we went in to record. So when we recorded the first EP with David Hitchcock, who was Genesis' producer, it felt like we'd really arrived – we were a professional band, in a proper recording studio. Then we went into the Marquee studios on the *Script* album. It was what I wanted to do. It felt like we'd arrived. We were successful.



"Look into my eyes, look into my eyes..."

KEVIN NIKON

I can remember my dad saying to me when we were playing at the Marquee club, maybe six months after I joined, "Do you think you'll ever make any money doing this?" And I was, like, "I dunno, but I'm enjoying it." Then less than a year later, we were playing Hammersmith Odeon, and he said, "I feel a bit silly now saying what I said to you back then." I mean, we weren't really making any money but it looked like we were.

What do you hear when you listen back to the first couple of albums?

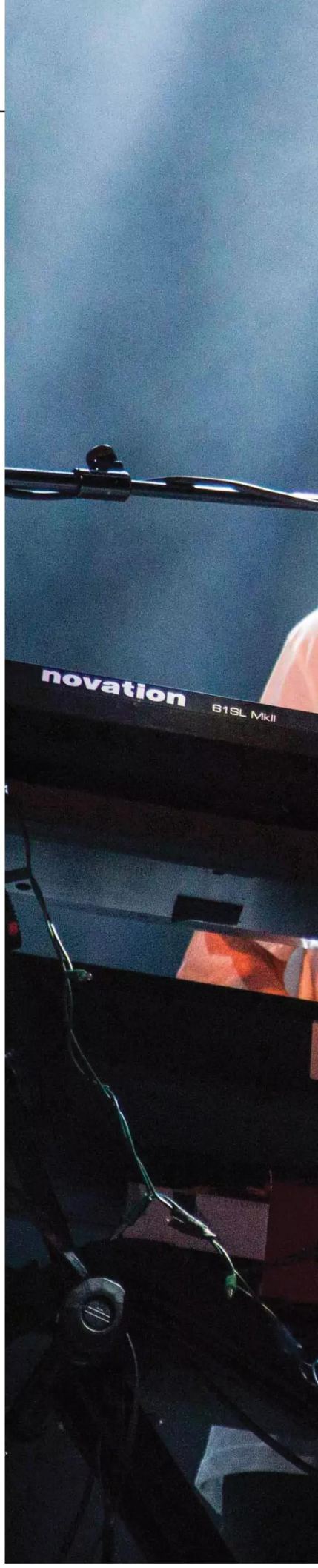
We remixed the *Script* album and the *Market Square Heroes* EP recently for our reissue series, and I know it sounds of its time in a lot of ways – especially some of the keyboard sounds – but they've got something about them. There's a cohesiveness. It all hangs together really nicely. And I wasn't even involved in writing half of those songs – songs like *He Knows You Know*, *Forgotten Sons* and *The Web* were songs that I heard them play before I joined. But they were the songs that made me go, "I want to be part of this."

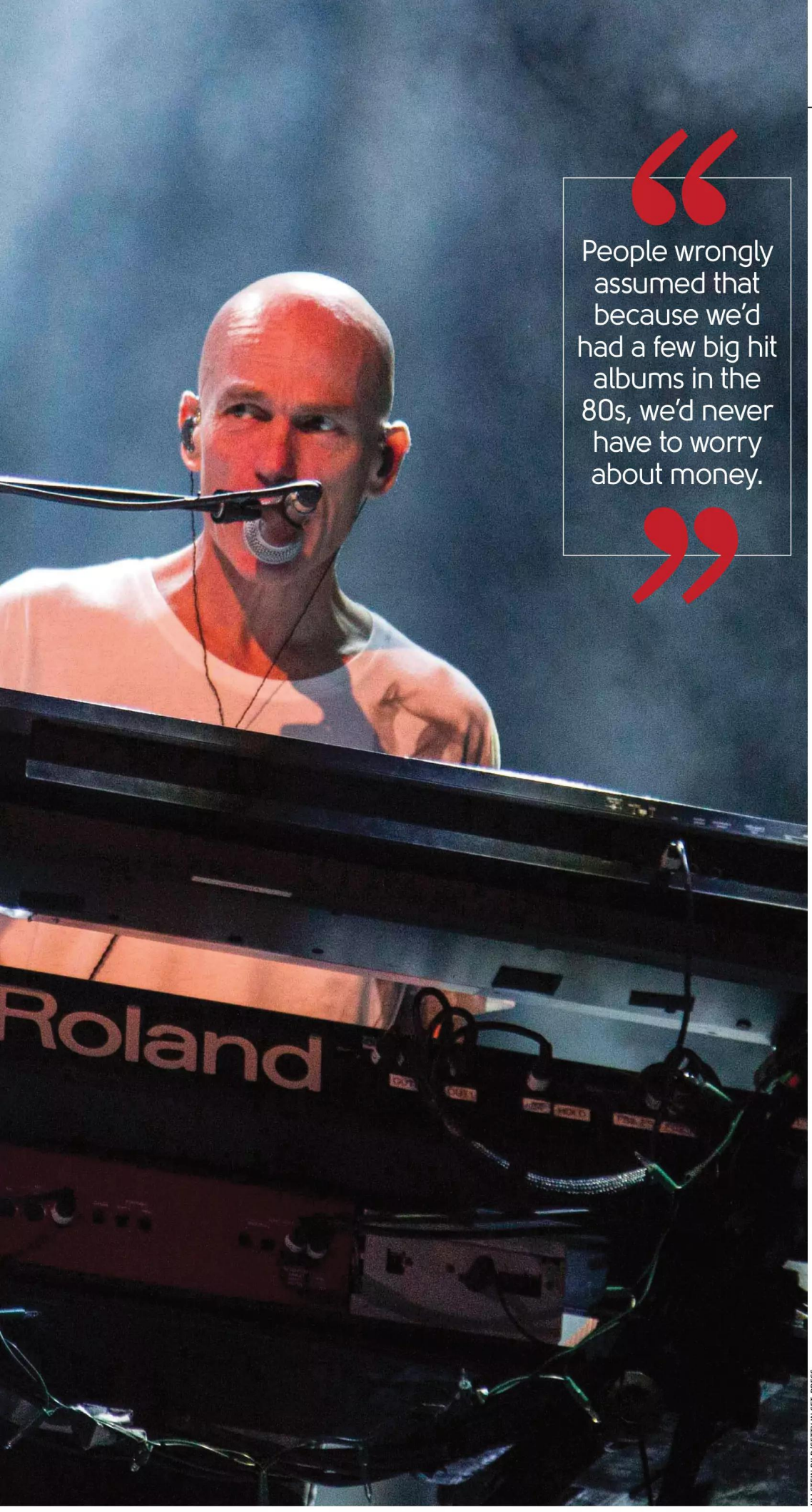
There's a spirit and edge to those early albums that is almost punk...

We used to talk about that. A lot of those so-called punk bands were actually great musicians – people like Elvis Costello and The Stranglers and The Clash, they weren't 15-year-old kids in a garage who had just picked up a guitar. We definitely tried to incorporate some of the influence of what was going on in music at the time, have a harder edge. And certainly with the lyrics, Fish was trying to write about something that was real rather than the fantasy stuff that a lot of progressive rock bands indulged in the 70s.

In the middle of the 80s, a weird thing happened: Marillion became pop stars. Did you enjoy the fame and attention that came with it?

I have to say, I didn't really notice it too much at the time. It was all happening so quickly, and we were so busy with touring and recording and making videos and whatever that we had no time to wander round and go, "Hey, we're famous." It's not like





> People wrongly assumed that because we'd had a few big hit albums in the 80s, we'd never have to worry about money.

ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY IN SET: PRESS

people were recognising us in the street. Fish was the only one who got recognised regularly. To be honest, we used to cross the road if somebody came up looking like they were going to ask for an autograph. We'd leave him on his own, which used to piss him off.

Was there a specific moment where it stopped being fun with Fish?

I think it happened at different times for each of us. I had a big argument with him at one point. It was to do with our families' relationship and stuff – there was a conflict between our respective partners. There was stuff that was said that probably shouldn't have been said, but you get to the point where you think, "Actually, I'm not really friends with this guy any more." And then it just becomes a working relationship.

There was a rift that developed between us over the making of *Clutching At Straws*, and certainly by the tour. He would hang out with the crew mostly, and we would keep away from him. Whenever you went anywhere with Fish, there was always a very messy ending to the evening. He wouldn't let you go home before five o'clock in the morning. It would be, "Fish, we've got a gig tomorrow, I've got to get back to the hotel", and he'd be, like, [Scots accent], "Yah fuckin' lightweight."

Was it a relief when he left?

Looking back now, we probably all thought it went to Fish's head 'cos he thought he could go solo. But by the same token, you could say it went to our head because we thought we could carry on without him. We were quite cocky about it really, and we had no reason to be.

We talked recently about the resignation letter he sent to us. In our heads, he resigned. In his head, he didn't resign – he sent us a letter saying he wanted things to change, and that would be a starting point for us to have discussions bout how things could change.

I hadn't read the letter since he wrote it. But Ian had a copy and he shared it with me. I re-read it, and I thought: "I can see what Fish means." He was making demands that were a bit unreasonable, like saying that he wanted 50 per cent of all the

> We argue about album covers. H always complains that we always end up with the one that looks the most brown.

publishing money and stuff like that. But it was definitely a 'we need to talk' letter, rather than 'I'm leaving'. But we just went, "Okay, fine, you've gone, and we're happy to see the back of you." So yes, by the time he left it was a relief.

What were your first impressions of Steve Hogarth?
He seemed a nice enough chap. And we really liked his demo tape that he sent to the publisher. There were a few we auditioned before who, once we got them in the room, we realised they weren't going to be right for us. Steve had a very natural way about him – he was confident without being cocky. We said, "Have a go at singing this." We gave a lyric he'd never seen before and some music he'd never heard before. And that become the chorus of *The King Of Sunset Town*. So instantly you could see if he wanted to, he could easily fit in with what we were doing.

How seriously did you consider changing your name when Steve joined? Did you have a list of alternatives?
We didn't have alternatives, but we did talk about it. A band like Split Enz, who changed their name to Crowded House, showed it was possible to do it. But then you look at difference between a Pink Floyd tour and a Roger Waters tour at the time in terms of sales and recognition, and you can see it would have been a high-risk strategy. By changing your name, you're probably dumping three quarters of your fans and you've got to start again.

It seemed like a big deal around *Brave* in the mid-90s, when Steve had been in the band for five years and people were still talking about Fish. But now it's four albums with Fish and 14 albums with H it doesn't look like a big deal. I'm glad we kept the name Marillion.

How bad did things get for Marillion in the 90s?
People wrongly assumed that because we'd had a few big hit albums in the 80s, we'd be set up for life and never have to worry about money. We did have a few good years, but there's a big difference from being financially secure and not having to work again. With EMI, our sales base had been around 300,000 units, which was pretty good. But as soon as we stepped away from the major label distribution after *Afraid Of Sunlight*, our sales dropped down to about 100,000. We ended up in a situation with an independent label who were just milking it for what they could. They weren't investing in trying to grow the album back up again. And we were back on a make-an-album-a-year treadmill, because that's what we needed to do to keep the money coming in to keep the band afloat.

Have you ever seen the photo of Radiohead when they were students, standing in front of a Fish-era Marillion poster?
It does vaguely ring a bell. I've met and had various chats with various members of Radiohead. I've never talked to Thom Yorke, but I've had involvement with [guitarist] Ed O'Brien because of the Featured Artists Coalition we were both involved in, and I've met [guitarist] Jonny Greenwood as well. My impression is that they were aware of Marillion, though I wouldn't say that they were ever fans. I think Thom Yorke would probably say, "Absolutely no way, not my sort of thing at all." But the others, while they probably wouldn't say we influenced them, they might acknowledge that we had things in common with them musically, certainly when it came to *OK Computer*. They were the new prog for a while, weren't they? Before they went completely weird.

You famously pioneered the idea of crowdfunding albums with Anoraknophobia, which changed everything for Marillion. Was there a point where you thought, "This is working, we're going to be alright"?
Probably by the time we made *Marbles*. The first time we did it, it was great and successful, but it wasn't huge. But we felt like, "Oh, this is a new way of working." By the time we made *Marbles*, we were feeling confident. It was a double album, it was really received by fans, we had a Top 10 hit with *You're Gone*, so we could tell that things had taken a turn for the better and we were going to be okay.

Has it been a steady journey since or have their been any bumps in the road?
Somewhere Else wasn't as well received as it could have been. It wasn't a change of direction, but it was a little bit harder, more modern sounding album at the time, and it didn't go down too well. But then you have to try different things. I think we really hit our stride working with Mike Hunter on *Sounds That Can't Be Made* and especially *FEAR* in 2016. I can't believe it's been that long. We really need to get another album out.

You've never released a solo album. Why not?
It comes down to a number of things. I come up with a lot of ideas and then I get bored of them and move on. When you're in a band situation and working with other people, thankfully other people don't let these other things go. So I do need to collaborate. Having said that, after a number of false starts over the years, I've actually made some progress with an solo album. I'm hoping to get something out relatively soonish. I'm more than halfway through writing and demoing an album with a bunch of musicians I'm working with.

Are you singing on it?
No. I'm not a singer. My singing's terrible.

What do you do outside of Marillion?
In recent years I've been doing a lot of running and keeping fit. You get to 58 and you think, "If I don't do anything, I'm going to get older even quicker."

Have you done a marathon?
I've done a few, but not in the last five years. I've done London a couple of times, and one in Brighton again. The first marathon I did was four hours and 20 minutes. The second time was four hours and eight minutes. The third time was four hours and two minutes. I really wanted to get below four hours but never managed it. And now I've kind of given up.

You're always very polite and diplomatic when people ask if you're getting back with Fish. Don't you ever want to say, "Don't be so fucking stupid"?
[Laughs] No, I don't see it like that. I understand why people would want us to do it, I really do. And I enjoy playing the old stuff from time to time. But I think it would be difficult to do something with Fish.

What's guaranteed to set the five of you arguing?
The album covers. Whenever we're coming up with an album cover design, H always complains that we always end up with the one that looks the most brown. Even *FEAR*, which was meant to be gold, was a shade of brown. *This Strange Engine*: brown. *Afraid Of Sunlight* – the original idea was a multicoloured Jesus from the hill in Rio. We scrapped that for a nice brown cover. We've had some nice arguments about album covers.

What's your personal favourite Marillion album?
I'd have to choose *Marbles*, just because it's got good songs on it, and a lot of variety. It's pretty strong consistently. Second favourite would probably be *This Strange Engine*. And *FEAR* is up there as well. There's a few songs on every album that I really like.

What's best: being in Marillion in 1985 or being in Marillion in 2020?
That's a really hard question. If I could go back to 1985 with everything I know now, I probably would enjoy it more than I did then. But it's really nice that we're still here and we've got what we've got and we've achieved what we're achieved. We've never got on better than we do at the moment, the five of us. We're all really good friends. I'd trade 1985 for now.

"Cheers!" Marillion toast the ups and downs of the last 40 years.

KEVIN NIXON

EDD WESTMACOTT/ GETTY

New Beginnings

Most bands would be reeling at the departure of such a larger-than-life figure as Fish. But **Marillion** soon hit on the perfect replacement in Steve Hogarth. The only problem? Convincing him to join "the least hip band on the planet."

Words: Dave Everley **Portrait:** Michel Linssen/Getty Images

In 1988, Marillion reached a watershed. Outsiders had written them off after the acrimonious departure of frontman Fish, but for the remaining members it was both a huge relief and an opportunity to shake off the baggage of the past and reinvent the band.

Before they could move forward, they needed to recruit a new singer — a task that would prove to be easier said than done. Tapes began flooding in, and the long process began.

Peter Trewavas: I don't think we really had our eye on anyone. We weren't really that sure what we wanted, but we certainly knew what we didn't want.

Ian Mosley: We didn't want a Fish clone.

Mark Kelly: I think we auditioned about 10 people altogether. Alan Reed [from neo-prog band Pallas] was one. There were two guys who both sang backing vocals for Cliff Richard but didn't know that they were both auditioning, and they didn't want us to tell the other one that they were there when they found out.

Peter Trewavas: There was an Irish singer that the record company had in mind, but he was in a band. The trouble is, all the singers we considered to be any good were all in bands in anyway.

Mark Kelly: Another guy turned with crutches and his leg in plaster. I'm in the studio talking stuff through with him and Ian's in the control room, he's writing 'pieces of eight' on paper and doing impressions of people falling over. The guy's got his back to Ian, so he can't see this, but I'm trying to talk to him seriously and I'm killing myself laughing.

Peter Trewavas: There were one or two people where we were, like, "Oh, that's quite interesting", but mostly it was: "Hmmmm..."

If Marillion were determined to carve out a future for themselves, Steve Hogarth was heading in the opposite direction. The 30-year-old singer and keyboard player's latest band, How We Live, had split up and he was seriously considering quitting music.

Steve Hogarth: My publisher sent a tape at the end of 1988. To be honest, I wasn't terribly interested in doing it.

Ian Mosley: I used to drive from my house to Aylesbury every day with a handful of cassettes on the passenger seat, and I'd put them in the cassette player and listen to them. And one day I put this cassette in, and it was Steve Hogarth singing this track called *Games In Germany*. I thought, "Wow, this guy's voice sounds great." I got to Pete's house and everybody was unanimous: "Get him along."

Steve Hogarth: I'd forgotten all about it until January 1989, when they rang. At about the same time, Matt Johnson of The The asked me to play piano on his tour. I always say I had to make a choice between the most hip band in the world, and the least.

Mark Kelly: We met at Pete's house, and Pete had cats, which was a real problem for Steve, 'cos he's got terrible allergy to cats. He didn't want to go in the house, and it was January, so we were standing outside in the freezing cold, talking. But he seemed a nice enough chap.

Ian Mosley: So we got into the rehearsal room, we had a lot of music written already, he said, "What do you want me to do?" And we said, "Be yourself, do whatever you want."

Steve Hogarth. That was all they seemed to want. If they'd said to me, 'This is our last album, this is what it sounds like, this is how many copies it sold and this is what we want you to do", I wouldn't have been interested. I'd feared that was what it would be like, but it was completely the opposite.

Mark Kelly: He had a very natural way about him. He was confident without being cocky. We said, "Have a go at singing this." We gave him a lyric he'd never seen before and some music he'd never heard before. And that become the chorus of *The King Of Sunset Town*.

Ian Mosley: We thought he was brilliant, so we asked him if he'd like to join... and he said he'd have to think about it. I thought, "Bollocks."

A mutual friend convinced the singer to sign up for *Seasons End*, their first post-Fish album. His decision was swayed by the fact they seemed unaffected by the loss of their talismanic ex-singer.

Steve Hogarth: I expected them to be a little bit edgy: "What are we gonna do?" There was no aspect of that. There was just a quiet confidence that it was all gonna be fine. That really surprised me.

Mark Kelly: We made *Seasons End* at a time when people expected us to fail, because Fish had left the band. We had something to prove

Peter Trewavas: *Seasons End* was a collection of music we'd written over the last few years. I'd say maybe 70 or 80 per cent of the material was already written when Fish was still in the band.

"My publisher sent a tape. To be honest, I wasn't terribly interested in doing it."
Steve Hogarth

Cabin pressure: the Hogarth line-up contemplate a new era.

Ian Mosley: Steve Hogarth used to arrive at rehearsals with a bucket full of cassettes with ideas for songs. We used to say to him, "Have you got anything in the bucket worth doing?" The first thing he ever pulled out of the bucket was *Easter*.

Mark Kelly: The pressure really was lyrics, because Fish was such a great at that side of things. So we were going out and searching for lyricists even before we met Steve.

Ian Mosley: Me and Mark went out and met [former Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band linchpin] Viv Stanshall. He'd written lyrics for things like *Arc Of A Diver*, the Steve Winwood album. We met in a pub in Hampstead, and he arrived in full Sherlock Holmes getup. He took us back to his place, which was a bedsit crammed full of stuff – it was like walking through an antiques shop. He was as mad as a hatter. He rang me up one morning and said, "Ian, do you know anyone who's got a lobster costume I could borrow?" He sent us lyrics through, but he was involved in writing a couple of plays, and things needed to happen quickly.

Mark Kelly: EMI had suggested John Helmer, who used to be in a band called The Piranhas. He was perfect for us – he was a great writer, very emotional. I think he wrote the lyrics to *Seasons End* over Christmas.

Steve Hogarth: I pushed against it a little bit on the ego front. But John would send these words, and if he had any egoistic self investment in them, he never showed that to me. He was happy for me to tear them apart, rewrite them, use just one line as a source of inspiration as a lyric. If he hadn't been, life would have been a lot more difficult, because then I wouldn't have felt free within them.

Mark Kelly: That whole album was fairly quick to write and record.

Ian Mosley: We recorded it at Hook End Manor, and it was the most glorious summer. It was like being on holiday. I remember Steve Hogarth and I sitting by the pool, and this guy arrives. He says, "You've got to stop recording, this is a writ from Fish." We said, "Just relax, have a drink." That was the vibe.

Mark Kelly: Making that album, we didn't really stop to take stock and think, "What sort of band do we want to be now?"

If *Seasons End* had been a breeze to make, the follow-up – eventually titled *Holidays In Eden* – would be a stress test for the new Marillion line-up. The differences in approach between the four longtime members and their new singer would soon be thrown into sharp relief.

Steve Hogarth: *Seasons End* was the wedding album. We'd all just met and we're having a whale of a time. When we came to write *Holidays In Eden*, we were starting with nothing, nada.

Ian Mosley: We were a bit lost. We were all in a room together for the first time, having to write from scratch, and it was hard.

Mark Kelly: We were confronted with the problem that H liked to work quickly. He wanted to write a song a day. We were, like, "You've got to let it mature, leave it for

"Anybody seen Ian?"

PRESS X2

"Me and Mark met Viv Stanshall. He arrived in the pub in full Sherlock Holmes get-up."
Ian Mosley

six months, come back to it, see if you still like it." It was a completely different way of approaching things.

Steve Hogarth: It was absurd. Even if they wrote good stuff, there was a feeling in the band that if it was put in the cellar to mature for six months and then revisited, it would've got a bit better, like wine. I'd go, "Right, this sounds great, let's finish it off." And they'd look at me, "Finish it off? Oh no, I think we should leave that now." I've just never heard of anything working like that.

Mark Kelly: He was incredibly frustrated. We were in a residential studio and we sent him home for about six weeks because he was driving us crazy because it was all going so slowly.

Steve Hogarth: They did say, "It might be better if you went home for a couple of weeks and just let us go at our pace." Part of me thought, "Wow, they're sending me home." Part of me thought, "Two weeks off!"

Mark Kelly: I think it did create some tension. I think he felt a little bit insulted that we asked him to do that. "You go home while we get on and write some Marillion music." It still felt like us four and him really not quite gelling.

Steve Hogarth: When I got back, they went, "Ta-dah! Here's what we've done while you've been away and it wasn't that good."

If the group's own internal wrangles weren't enough of an issue, there was the added weight of expectation from EMI. The label viewed Steve Hogarth as the man who could help steer Marillion into more commercial waters. For the follow-up to *Seasons End*, they paired the band with producer Chris Neil, who had previously worked with Sheena Easton, Dollar and Mike + The Mechanics.

Mark Kelly: The record company were very excited about Steve – about having a more commercial voice in place. They were thinking of Mike + The Mechanics and hitsville.

Steve Hogarth: There was external pressure for Marillion to be a pop band, but it wasn't one that we were aware of. The way record companies tend to operate, they do it via whisper to people who aren't in the band – they'll whisper stuff to management.

Ian Mosley: We were under a lot of pressure from the record company to serve up hit singles.

Peter Trewavas: We already had a commercial side. We have our melodies and bits and pieces than other things.

Steve Hogarth: We were all deeply suspicious of Chris Neil, but he disarmed us right away by telling us that his son was a huge fan of Marillion and his son would never speak to him again if he fucked us up.

Mark Kelly: We felt really comforted when he said that. Of course the first thing he says is, "Where's the singles? The record company have said to me we need three singles."
We had *Cover My Eyes*, which wasn't really finished and *No One Can*, which is a very obvious pop song.

Steve Hogarth: I was listening to something Mark did one day and I though that would make a lovely pop song. That turned into *No One Can*.

Mark Kelly: Chris suggested we record *Dry Land*, from the How We Live Album. It is a good song, but it isn't a Marillion song. But we recorded it anyway.

Steve Hogarth: Chris is a really nice bloke, but with a laser-sharp pop sensibility. He wasn't going to change his spots for us, but he was going to do what he could.

Steve Rothery: You could argue that he brought some commercial edge to the band that we didn't have. But there were elements that he blanded out a little bit too much.

Holidays in Eden was released in June 1991. It was preceded by the single *Cover My Eyes (Pain And Heaven)*, a track whose main guitar motif evoked U2's *Where The Streets Have No Name*, causing consternation among sections of the band's fanbase. While the album itself had its share of complex musical passages and bristling atmospherics, notably on opening track *Splintering Heart*, elsewhere it skewed heavily towards glossy, polished pop, notably on *No One Can* and *Dry Land*.

Steve Hogarth: *Holidays In Eden* sounded like a proper, polished album. I thought, "This sounds posh and proper to me, and I've waited all my life to be involved in a posh record."

Peter Trewavas: Having gone through that process, we all thought it was a bit of a Marillion-lite album.

Ian Mosley: Some fans were probably quite pissed off 'cos it was a different sounding album. And it was glossier. I listened to some of the rehearsal tapes and it sounds quite different – it sounds quite rough, more rocking out.

Steve Hogarth: I was convinced *No One Can* was a massive hit single. It got record of the week at Radio 1, it was hammered to death. The guy at EMI said, "I'll throw myself out of the window if your single doesn't go up next week." If EMI's promotion department had decided to prioritise our single at radio the week it entered the chart, it would have carried on up. Instead they decided to prioritise Vanilla Ice's follow-up to *Ice Ice Baby*. He never threw himself out of the window.

Steve Rothery: We felt that EMI had pushed us in this direction where we'd have these pop rock hits, and it didn't really happen. And we felt that was a bit unfair really when we were doing very well by ourselves, thank for your very much.

Mark Kelly: I think we were still busy trying to find our musical direction.

Steve Hogarth: After *Holidays In Eden* came out there was a general feeling in the band that it was too poppy and had been a mistake. There was an undercurrent that we had to react to it. And that's when we made *Brave*.

Steve Rothery: It was with the *Brave* album that we started to work as a unit.

THE Great ESCAPE

In 1994, **Marillion** released their dark masterpiece *Brave*. From its intriguing inspiration to recording in a chateau and the frictions that followed, the entire band look back on their great 90s concept album and the record that pointed the way to their future.

Words: Dave Everley

Steve Hogarth never knew the name of 'The Girl Who Didn't Jump'. He can't even remember when he first heard about her. It was sometime in the mid-80s, back when he was a member of How We Live.

Hogarth heard about her on a radio broadcast: how police had picked up a teenage girl who was wandering, lost and confused, on the Severn Bridge between England and Wales.

The bridge has been a suicide hotspot since it was opened in 1966, a magnet for troubled souls like the nameless girl. She refused to give her name, refused to even talk. Police appealed for information on the radio and TV, which is when Hogarth heard about her. It struck a chord with him.

"I thought, 'That sounds like the first page of a mystery novel,'" he recalls. "I scribbled it down and forgot about it."

But he didn't, not quite. The story of The Girl Who Didn't Jump stayed deep in Hogarth's mind, floating just below the waves of his subconsciousness, not surfacing but not sinking either.

It was sometime in 1992 when Hogarth thought about her properly again. By then he was the singer with Marillion, the band he had joined a few years earlier. It was while Marillion were writing songs for a new album that Hogarth told his bandmates the story of The Girl Who Didn't Jump – a story that would become the beating heart of the record.

The album they built around it, *Brave*, would turn out to be the most pivotal of their career. It would determine their future – or whether they even had one. It finally brought them together as a band while irrevocably damaging their relationship with their long-time label, EMI, and pushing away a whole swathe of their fan base. It ultimately set them on a tumultuous, frequently painful path that brought them to where they are today.

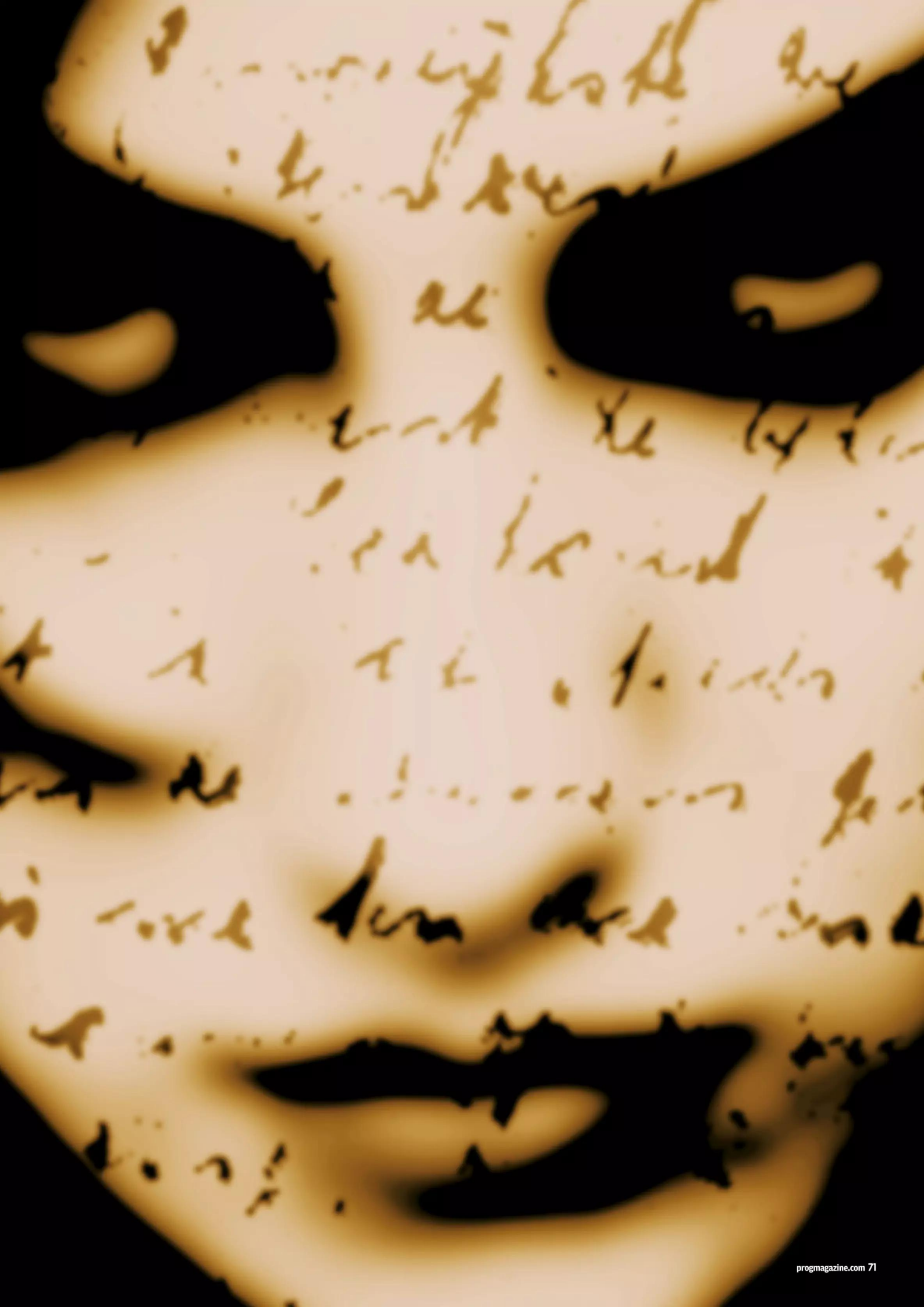
But if *Brave* seemed at the time like a huge gamble that backfired massively, today it stands as the great concept album of the 1990s and an unsung masterpiece. In an era when idiots ruled, it was a beacon of intelligence and depth.

The story of the girl on the Severn Bridge could be read as a metaphor for Marillion, only in reverse. The girl never jumped, but Marillion did.

"*Brave* was the point where the pieces of the jigsaw came together," says Hogarth. "We became this other band, with me in it. We became the band we are now."

> "If you liked Marillion, you didn't really own up to it. It was like something terrible had happened to you."
>
> **Ian Mosley**

It's 24 years since Marillion released *Brave*, but it remains fresh in their minds. Today, this is mainly because The Racket Club, their base/studio/lair on the outskirts of Aylesbury, is bustling with a team of people packing special vinyl editions of the brand new deluxe vinyl reissue of the album into large envelopes, ready to send out. Hogarth, keyboard player Mark Kelly and drummer Ian Mosley take turns to troop



upstairs to the band's office to look back on the album. Guitarist Steve Rothery and bassist Peter Trewavas reminisce over the phone and Skype respectively – both are out of the country, the former playing a solo gig in Copenhagen, the latter working on a mystery project in Baltimore in the US. "You'll find out about it in due course," he says enigmatically.

Fittingly, it's here that *Brave* began to take shape a quarter of a century ago – or at least nearby, in another unit a few doors down, home of the original Racket Club. "I remember me and Steve H would go there when nobody was around and have these little night sessions," says Kelly. "And the opening part of the album came in one of those night sessions."

To get to the heart of the album that would change Marillion's career, you have to understand what came before. Hogarth joined in 1989, after the departure of original singer Fish. This new partnership hit the ground running with 1989's *Season's End*, the first album they made with Hogarth. It was partly an act of defiance.

> "The record company were very excited about Steve and having a more commercial voice in place. They were thinking of Mike And The Mechanics and hitsville."
>
> **Pete Trewavas**

"A lot of people expected us to fail without Fish," says Kelly. "But we were all very excited to be working together and it was all very quick. But we didn't really stop to take stock and think, 'What sort of band do we want to be now?'"

If they didn't know themselves, their label, EMI, had a good idea. They figured that Hogarth's background in poppier acts like The Europeans and How We Live would help push this sometimes complex band towards the musical middle ground. "If you liked Marillion, you didn't really own up to it," says Ian Mosley, wryly. "It was like something terrible had happened to you."

For their next album, *Holidays In Eden*, EMI hooked Marillion up with Mike And The Mechanics producer Chris Neil.

"The record company were very excited about Steve and having a more commercial voice in place," says Pete Trewavas. "They were thinking of Mike And The Mechanics and hitsville."

Churning out hit singles to order was, of course, easier said than done. As the rush of excitement that had fuelled *Seasons End* began to wear off, the gulf between the two constituent parts of Marillion was becoming increasingly evident.

"With *Holidays In Eden*, we started it with a blank slate, then suddenly we were confronted with this problem that H liked to work quickly and wanted to write a song a day, and we were like, 'You've got to let it mature, leave it

EMI/MARILLION ARCHIVE

Marillion, L-R: Steve Rothery, Ian Mosley, Pete Trewavas, Steve Hogarth, Mark Kelly.

six months, come back to it, see if you still like it,'" says Kelly.

"It was absurd," laughs Hogarth.

The different modus operandi caused friction. At one point, the singer was even sent home from the residential studio while the band worked on the music. "It did create some tension," says Kelly. "It still felt like us four and him really not quite gelling."

Holidays In Eden didn't quite turn Marillion into the new Mike And The Mechanics. The album reached No.7 in the UK charts, though it faded fast. It never reached the crossover audience their label hoped for, while the band's hardcore fans were suspicious of its glossier approach.

"I suppose you could say it was a bit of a 'Marillion-lite' album in some respects," says Pete Trewavas.

More than a decade into their career, Marillion had learned a valuable lesson. "There was sense that we tried doing it EMI's way, we tried making a commercial record, and it didn't really work," says Steve Rothery. "So let's just do what we love – it'll either sell or it won't sell, but at least we'll be artistically satisfied."

Their next move would be to go in the exact opposite direction. If *Holidays In Eden* was quick, gleaming and ultimately a compromise of sorts, *Brave* was anything but.

Between *Holidays In Eden* and *Brave*, several significant things changed in Marillion's world. Some of those things were in their control, others weren't. One key decision they made was to fit out the original Racket Club with new equipment, using their advance for the next album.

"I was coming unhinged. I was becoming increasingly shiny and Jean Paul Gaultier-clad on the outside, and lost inside."

Steve Hogarth

"The label were really against it," says Kelly. "But we said, 'We can use it for multiple albums,' which was a really good move. It basically set us up for when we later got dropped by EMI."

It was there that the band started writing the new album. It felt like a chance for them to properly start working together after the false start of *Holidays In Eden*. "The feeling changed, the surroundings of what we were doing became a little earthier and not so glamorous," says Hogarth. "That might have rubbed off."

But something else had changed – something out of their hands. Marillion had been assigned a new A&R man, a young hotshot named Nick Mander. In the band's telling, Mander wanted them to adopt a different approach to making the album.

Hogarth reveals: "Nick Mander said, 'I've promised the boys upstairs there's not going to be any of this long, sprawling, big budget, contemplating your navel for six months stuff – we're going to get a producer in who is much more indie and down with the kids, we're going to make a fast, rough, raw album.' I was up for it. But, of course, I'm the one who likes to work quickly. They were all [worriedly]: 'Ooh...'"

"We thought it was nuts," says Trewavas. "We thought the poor chap was being hung out to dry. Being told to get Marillion to do something quick and snappy? We're clearly not capable of that. We thought, 'He's having a laugh. Does he realise what we do and how we do it?'"

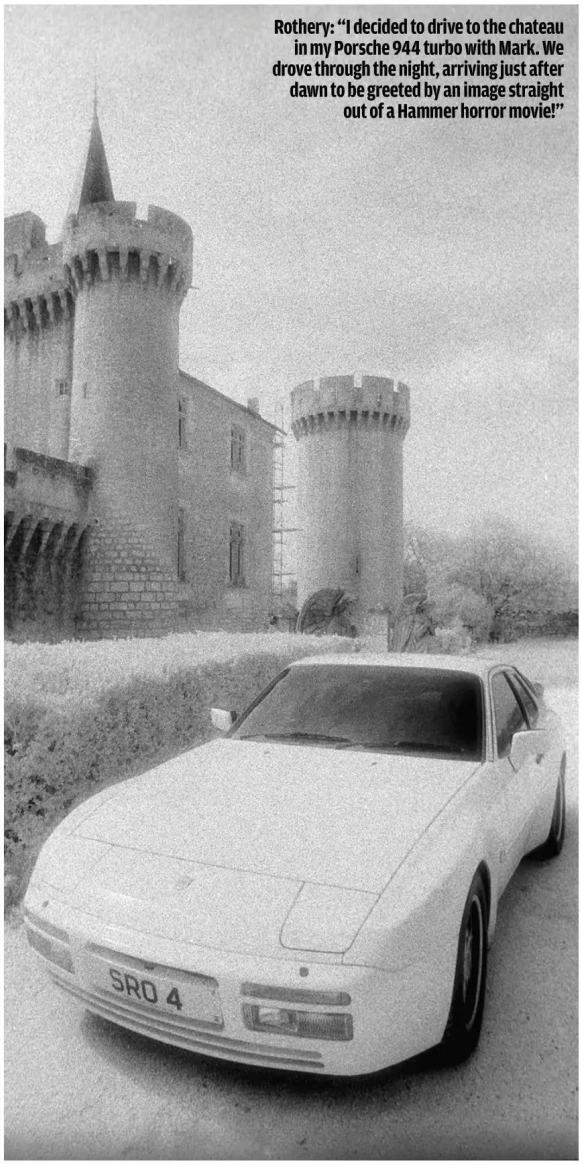
Mander's first decision was to introduce the band to Dave Meegan, who had recently worked with fleetingly successful Manchester indie group The Milltown Brothers. He was unaware that Meegan already had a relationship with Marillion – he had been a young tape operator at Sarm East Studios in London, when they recorded *Fugazi* a decade earlier.

"It was a different band and it wasn't," says Meegan today. "Obviously, Steve's a very different person to Fish, but the methodology of the band was the same."

That methodology chimed with Meegan's own. He learnt his trade working for Trevor Horn, and the Yes/Buggles producer's meticulousness had rubbed off.

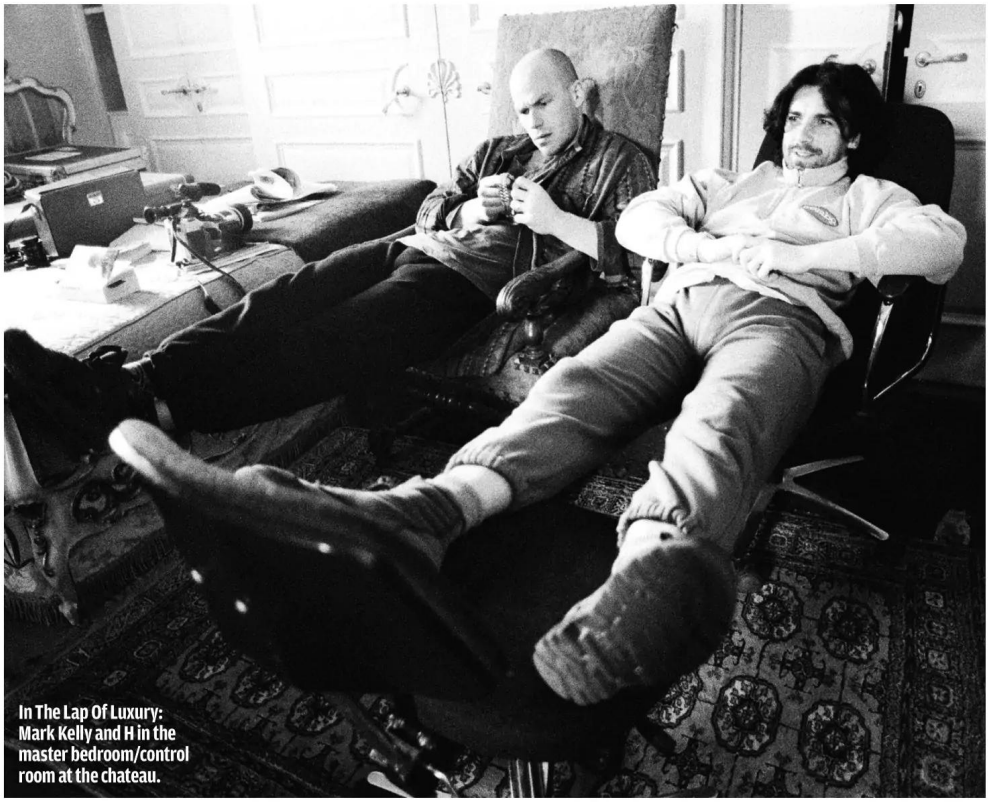
"We like to work slowly and explore all the alternatives and ponder the music and do a lot of chin-scratching and nodding of heads," says Trewavas. "And Dave was exactly the same: 'This is interesting, let's see where it takes us...' And between us, we just thought, 'We'll take as long as we want.' And we did."

B/W IMAGES FROM VOLUME TWO OF STEVE ROTHERY'S *POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD* PHOTO DIARIES. VOLUME ONE IS AVAILABLE AT WWW.MARILLION.COM/SHOP/MERCH/POSTCARDSFROMTHEROAD.HTM



Rothery: "I decided to drive to the chateau in my Porsche 944 turbo with Mark. We drove through the night, arriving just after dawn to be greeted by an image straight out of a Hammer horror movie!"

The Great Escape: Marillion recording at the chateau.



In The Lap Of Luxury: Mark Kelly and H in the master bedroom/control room at the chateau.

The third thing that happened that changed the course of *Brave*, and by extension Marillion's career, was that they were suddenly presented with the opportunity of recording in an honest-to-God chateau in the south of France. The castle, located in Marouatte in the Dordogne region, belonged to Miles Copeland, head of the band's US label IRS and brother of Police drummer Stewart Copeland.

"We liked that idea," says Hogarth. "'Yeah, let's find a house cos it'll keep the costs down. We'll get something with a vibe and go and work there.' We all thought it would make for an interesting record and an adventure."

And so, in February 1993, Marillion and their equipment found themselves en route to the south of France to start work on their "fast, rough, raw" new album.

"I drove down there with Mark through the night," recalls Rothery. "We got there just after the dawn. You see it up on the hill, and it's a Hammer horror house basically."

Meegan set up the band's equipment in the large, gothic living room, and his

MARILLION ARCHIVE

DOUBLE ENTENDRE

The story of *Brave*'s double ending.

Marillion's sixth album remains the darkest of their career, and of the 1990s. But there was one unexpected comedic influence that shaped at least part of it: Monty Python.

The vinyl version of the album features a 'secret' ending. Where the original record pulled itself out of the darkness with the uplifting album closer *Made Again*, a hidden second groove featured an alternative ending with six minutes of lapping water sounds, suggesting the main character had jumped from the bridge.

"That was my idea," says Mark Kelly. "And like all good ideas, it was stolen. I'd had a copy *The Monty Python Matching Tie And Handkerchief* when I was a kid, which had a double groove – you put the needle down and you didn't know which jokes you were going to get."

The band enlisted the talents of George 'Porky' Peckham, the legendary recording engineer who was famous for etching messages into the run-out grooves of the albums he had worked on. Peckham had in fact cut the double ending on the Monty Python album.

"Basically, he had to cut it by hand," says Kelly. "He'd cut one slightly wider groove with one ending, then cut in the alternative ending in the spiral between it."

And which ending does Kelly prefer? "Oh, I do like the original ending, the one where she survives. I like what happens musically with the other ending, but it might be a bit too dark after you've sat through all this doom and gloom." **DEV**

control at the other end of the chateau, in the master bedroom. "The big four-poster bed was still in there," he says, "so I put all my stuff around it."

They weren't going into the sessions cold. They had riffs and chords for the songs that would become *The Great Escape* and *Hard As Love*, worked up back in Aylesbury. Rothery had written the intro to the album's closing track, *Made Again*, for his newborn daughter.

"*Brave* was the first album we'd actually written between the five of us," says Rothery. "It was the first time we had to knuckle down. And because it was a concept album, the rest of us found it easy to get our heads around what we were trying to do with it."

It was Hogarth who came up with the idea of making *Brave* a concept album. "I'd got a song that became *Living With The Big Lie* about what

> "Because it was a concept album, the rest of us found it easy to get our heads around what we were trying to do with it."
>
> **Steve Rothery**

human beings are capable of getting used to. We're hardwired to get used to anything, no matter how obscene – it'll shock us again the second time, then the third time it's just how things are," he says. "That took me back to the girl on the bridge and the radio broadcast."

Hogarth floated the suggestion past his bandmates. "And they all jumped on that as though I'd laid them out a clotted cream tea: 'We'll have some of that!'" he says.

Marillion had been here before. Their last fully fledged concept album, 1985's *Misplaced Childhood*, was their biggest hit and had rescued their career. But if the idea of a concept album had been uncool back then, it seemed positively suicidal now.

"Oh yeah," says Hogarth. "But we didn't give a fuck. We learned ages ago that not caring about those things was the way forward."

They quickly fell into an efficient work pattern: breakfast, a morning of work, break for lunch, return to work, eat, maybe have a few wines and then continue working in the evening. Ian Mosley's drums were the first thing to be recorded.

"We spent quite a while getting the drum sound and experimenting," says Mosley. "Dave really did like experimenting, sometimes to the point where I thought, 'I'm not going to play this one any better.'"

"Dave started editing drums, and just carried on," says Rothery. "For days and days and days and days. We just sat around going, 'What's he doing? Is he losing the plot?'"

The days turned into weeks, and the weeks began to stretch out. By the second month, the band were starting to get antsy. They called a meeting with Meegan in the chateau's dining area.

"We said to Dave, 'Can we have a chat?'" says Hogarth. "We said, "We're all a bit worried about how long it's taking, Dave.' And he said, "Well, the way I see it, we can either make a record or we can make a masterpiece. And I think this could be it. So you tell me what you want me to do.' And we all went, 'Let's make a masterpiece,' and that was the end of it."

As Meegan and the band worked, the songs began to take focus, as did the overarching concept – not so much a straightforward narrative about the girl on the bridge as a series of snapshots that showed how she got there. According to Hogarth, many of the lyrics featured thinly disguised autobiographical elements: *Living With The Big Lie*, *Brave* itself, and especially *The Hollow Man*.

"*The Hollow Man* was a piece of confession about where I was at, personally," says Hogarth. "I was coming unhinged. I was becoming increasingly shiny and Jean Paul Gaultier-clad on the outside, and lost inside. My wife used to find me fetal on the lounge floor sometimes when she came in. It was touring, trying to be the father of two small kids and not being cut out for it, or so I felt; being in love with too many people and too many things. And just trying to balance all that and deliver some kind of amazing piece of work that would revive the band's fortunes."

Not all of the songs fitted the concept. The pulsing hard rock of *Paper Lies*, included at Meegan's insistence to give the album's otherwise moody musical flow a kick, was originally inspired by the death of crooked newspaper tycoon Robert Maxwell and was only retrospectively crowbarred into the existing narrative. In a nod to the song's subject, who died in mysterious circumstances after falling from his yacht, it ends with an enormous splash – something the band recorded by throwing a boulder from a home-made raft inside a

IMAGES FROM VOLUME TWO OF STEVE ROTHERY'S *POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD* PHOTO DIARIES AND THAT VOLUME ONE IS AVAILABLE AT WWW.MARILLION.COM/SHOP/MERCH/POSTCARDSFROMTHEROAD.HTM

Rothery: "Dave Meegan recording, with Mark on the right, and H and Pete in the background."

cave near the chateau. This level of detail was admirable, but it didn't impress the band's paymasters at EMI. Not that Marillion themselves were concerned.

"We weren't bothered by the fact that Nick Mander was starting to come unhinged by the fact we hadn't done very much," says Kelly. "As long as we didn't get the plug pulled on us, which we didn't think we would."

They spent three months in Marouatte in total – more than enough time to make a record. But Marillion and Meegan were nowhere near finished. In the summer, they decamped to Liverpool's Parr Street Studio to continue recording. Down in London, EMI were getting increasingly frantic about the length of time it was taking to make this 'rough, ready, quick' album.

Relations were becoming increasingly strained. The band say that Nick Mander blew his top when they bought a £30 coffee machine. Another time, Hogarth told the label that he needed a week off.

"I was either going to go on this family holiday or get divorced, which was perfectly reasonable on my wife's part," says Hogarth. "And it was like, 'EMI have gone nuts. They say you can't.' So I got on a train and went to London to see the head of A&R face-to-face and say, 'I know you think we're all just sitting on sun loungers, but we're working very hard and making a great record.'"

Hogarth got his holiday, but EMI refused to ease the pressure. They wanted a Marillion album, and they wanted it as soon as possible.

"Their theory was that it was still going to be finished sooner with pressure than it would have without," says Meegan. "But that sort of album, you should be feeling pressure and tension – that's what's most of it's about."

Marillion spent another four months in Parr Street on top of the three months they'd spent in Marouatte. Neither the band nor Meegan say they were concerned about the album ever spinning out of their control, but Mark Kelly admits that the occasional nagging doubt crept in.

"We got to the end of it and I remember thinking, 'What if it's shit? What if no one likes it?'" he says. "When you get that far into it, it's

"IT WASN'T LIKE WE WEREN'T SPENDING MONEY ON THEM."

Nick Mander, Marillion's A&R man while they recorded *Brave*, answers his critics...

Nick Mander is frequently painted as the villain of the *Brave* story, at least from Marillion's point of view. But the man who worked as the band's A&R during that period has his own version of events.

"I'd been in the A&R department at EMI for quite a while, and I'd had some big hit records with bands like EMF," Mander tells *Prog*. "I was asked if I'd A&R a Marillion album. I knew they'd been through the whole trauma of Fish leaving and trying to reposition themselves as a band, but I knew nothing about them beyond that."

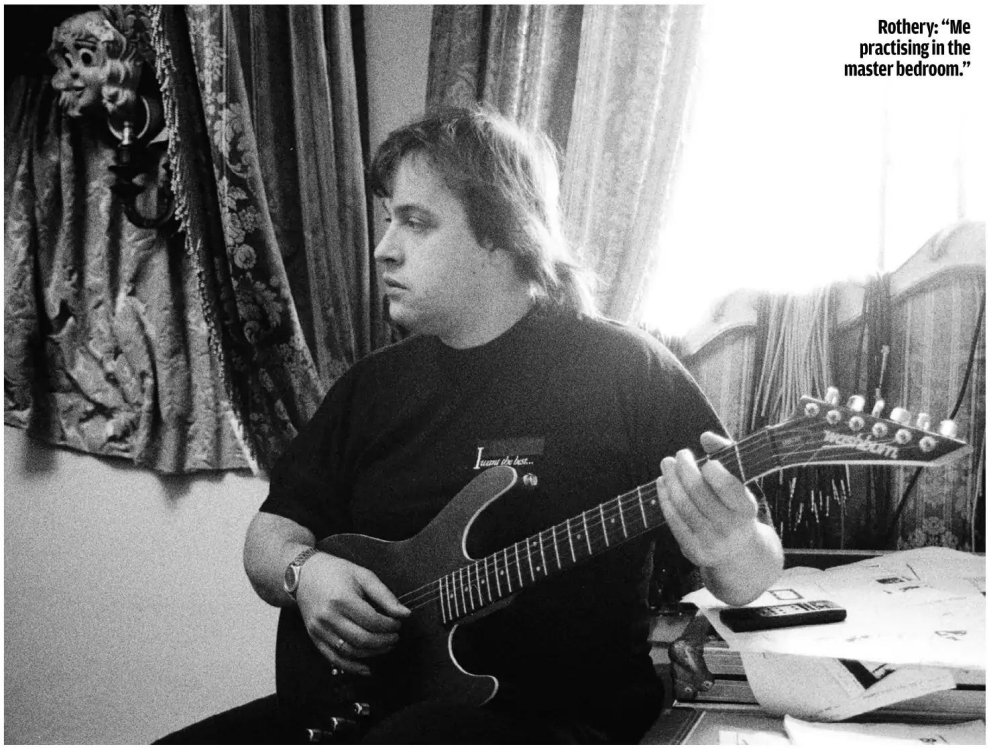
As a young kid, Mander had been a fan of Yes and Genesis, and he recognised what Marillion wanted to do. "When they told me they wanted to make this record about this girl, I thought, 'This is *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, this is fantastic!' I would say they probably would never have made that record with another A&R guy."

It was Mander who brought Dave Meegan into the picture – the producer was married to his PA. "I asked Marillion if they'd be interested in having him on the record, they met him and they liked him," he says.

He laughs when reminded of the fact that he apparently said he wanted to make a cheap, fast album. "If we'd wanted to make a cheap, fast album, we'd have done it in the UK. We sent them to the fucking Dordogne. I don't remember any pressure to deliver, but maybe there was. There was a lot of toing and froing and a lot of recording – it was a complicated record they wanted to make. We let them record in a French chateau, we let them make a movie – it wasn't like we weren't spending money on them."

Mander remembers having "a brilliant time" making *Brave*, though he concedes that the album probably did damage the band's relationship with the label.

"I think that was the beginning of the end," he says. "I think they weren't a band who suited being on EMI. They were always on the outside of the establishment, which is a great thing. They were coming to breaking point with the label, and maybe it was overdue. Look where they are now – the best thing that happened to them was that they left EMI." **DEV**



Rothery: "Me practising in the master bedroom."

"It was us putting two fingers up to the music business. That came back to bite us on the backside, but it also allowed us to chart a course of our own making."

Steve Rothery

possible that there might come a point where you're just not willing to admit that it's terrible, because of the time you've invested in it."

"We didn't know, even when it was finished, what it was," says Hogarth. "I remember feeling very nervous listening to the mixes. Being excited but at the same time thinking, 'This sort of sounds like *Quadrophenia* or something. I don't know what people are going to make of it.'"

There were other storm clouds gathering on the horizon. EMI were distinctly unimpressed by the length of time it had taken Marillion to make *Brave*. The "fast, rough, raw" album had come several months late, and certainly not cheaply.

"By the time we got to the end of that seven months, the writing was on the wall regarding our relationship with the label," says Rothery. "We'd made a fantastic record and we had to hope that it was going to be successful enough to justify this huge expense and the damaging of our relationship with the label."

Still, EMI weren't so pissed off that they didn't plan a big release party for the album at the London Planetarium. The idea was to invite assorted journalists and radio executives along without telling them who it was they were listening to.

"That was a big fuck up by EMI," says Kelly. "They basically tried to make people believe it was a new Pink Floyd album, which was a huge mistake – they thought if they did that then more people would come along to the playback. But of course people came along and went, 'What the fuck's this? This isn't Pink Floyd!'"

For a group who had long been critical whipping boys, *Brave* was surprisingly well received. *Q* magazine praised the album, calling it "dark and impenetrable". Hogarth beams at the description. "I liked that. That's a compliment."

But "dark and impenetrable" doesn't traditionally equate to commercial gold. *Brave* scraped into the UK Top 10 by the skin of its teeth – their lowest-charting album to date. The first single, *The Hollow Man*, reached No.30. The follow-up, the snappy *Alone Again In The Lap Of Luxury*, didn't even make the Top 50.

In fairness, Marillion's timing was lousy. *Brave* was released just as the nascent Britpop movement began to take shape. A 70-minute concept album about a suicidal girl was always going to struggle next to Blur or Oasis. But it was more than just the nation's pop kids that Marillion failed to entice. The album left sections of their own fan base cold.

"We knew it wasn't immediate," says Trewavas. "We just hoped that people would give it the time of day and allow it to grow on them."

If *Brave* started to separate out the fair-weather fans from the diehards, then the tour finished the job. The band elected to play the album from start to finish, with Hogarth acting out characters from the songs in time-honoured Peter Gabriel fashion. At one point, this involved tying his hair into pigtails and putting on lipstick to play the girl herself. It was a deliberate challenge: are you with us on this journey?

"The atmosphere in the concert halls was, like, 'Fucking hell, what's all this?'" says Mosley. "When we came on and did the encore and played songs that weren't from *Brave*, it was a completely different show. You could physically see people sigh with relief."

Neither the tour nor the album did much to build Marillion's audience – or even retain it. *Brave* sold around 300,000 copies – good numbers today, but less than half of what *Seasons End* had sold five years earlier. "It was certainly a step down from where we'd been before, sales-wise," says Kelly.

Brave's protracted gestation, coupled with its apparent lack of success, was noticed at the top at their label. EMI's European boss, Jean-François Cecillon, called a meeting with the band.

"He said, 'I need you to give me a single on your next album or that's it,'" says Kelly. "His exact words: 'I want *Cry Me A River*.' We came up with *Beautiful*, which was the closest thing to a single we had. But I'm not sure we were the right band at that time to be having hit singles."

They may not have been able to write hits to order, but Marillion conceded that they should at least think about working faster on their next album. That record, *Afraid Of Sunlight*, came out just over a year after *Brave*. But it was too little, too late. As they suspected, the writing was already on the wall. The label dropped them soon after.

"We just went back to being the band the media hated," says Kelly. "As far as the mainstream music press was concerned, we didn't deserve to live. It was business as usual."

What happened next to Marillion is a story in itself: how a disastrous deal with independent label Castle saw their stock plummet to rock bottom, how they hit on the idea of crowdfunding a US tour and the subsequent *Anoraknophobia* album, how they created a brand new business model that didn't just secure their survival but sustains them – and so many other bands – to this day.

But *Brave* has its own story too.

Bravehearts: the band backstage at The Forum in London, March 5, 1994.

"Being told to get Marillion to do something quick and snappy? We're clearly not capable of that."

Pete Trewavas

Glam Rock: Steve Hogarth gets into character in 1994.

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

This "dark and impenetrable" record proved a tough sell at the time, but it has taken on an afterlife of its own. They have revisited it twice during the past 20 years, playing it in full in 2003 and again in 2011.

"We lost a lot of fans on *Brave*," says Hogarth. "It wasn't well received. Everybody now looks back and goes, 'What a great album.' But nobody was saying that the day it came out."

"I think it needed at least a year or two after its release before people saw it for what it was," says Rothery. "It's definitely us going, 'This is what we do, this is who we are – we hope you like it, but this is the course we're committed to.'"

One of the reasons for its longevity is musical: its careful pacing, its shifting moods, the attention to detail that saw them recording the sound of rocks splashing into water in caves in the south of France. But it also represents something else: this was the ultimate underdog record by the ultimate underdog band.

"People that listened to us are willing to invest the time," says Mark Kelly. "They're willing to go, 'Oh, I didn't really get that, I'm going to give it another listen,' rather than 'I didn't really get that, I'm going to move onto the next thing.'"

If *Brave*'s impact seemed negligible at the time, today it feels like a landmark. It proved that there was still space for intelligent, intricate conceptual music in the charts. You can trace a line from it to Radiohead's *OK Computer* (released just three years later) and on to Anathema's masterful *The Optimist*, which unconsciously echoes *Brave*'s psychogeographical journey to Marillion's own *F.E.A.R.*, an album which shares so many characteristics with *Brave*.

"We aren't here to play nice shiny music that you can hear anywhere," says Pete Trewavas. "We're here to do something different and shake a few trees and make people think. Hopefully we did and hopefully we still do."

And what about the girl on the bridge who inspired the album, The Girl Who Didn't Jump? Steve Hogarth remembers reading that her parents came and collected her and took her back to the West Country. "I think they all lived reasonably happily ever after," he says, but he doesn't know anything beyond that. He suspects they might know about the album, though they've never been in touch. Why would they? *Brave* was a heavily fictionalised version of a turbulent event, and not the sort of thing they'd want to stir memories of.

But Marillion did jump, and it would eventually be the remaking of them. Their dark masterpiece started off a chain of events – some of them painful, some of them not – that culminated in their eventual rebirth.

"It was us putting two fingers up to the music business," says Steve Rothery. "That came back to bite us on the backside, but it also allowed us to chart a course of our own making. It was responsible for our subsequent path and the whole crowdfunding thing and the reinvention of how a band can work. And that's why we're still here."

BRAVE - THE MOVIE

How Marillion as the Cecil B. DeMilles of prog didn't quite work...

If spending several months recording an album in a French chateau wasn't grand enough, Marillion decided to push the boat out even further by making a full-length movie to accompany *Brave*.

"We'd made three videos for the singles from *Holidays In Eden*, all of which cost 30 or 40 grand each," says Mark Kelly. "We thought, 'Why don't we just take that money to make a movie?' We had a story we thought would be good to tell. We'd all seen *The Wall*, so we knew there were examples of good rock movies out there."

Armed with around £120,000 – "Not a lot, really," says Kelly – the band began scouting for potential directors. They sounded out a few, but decided to go with cult filmmaker Richard Stanley.

The South African-born Stanley had made his name directing videos for the likes of Public Image Ltd and flour-encrusted goths Fields Of The Nephilim. But it was his two full-length films, the 1990 sci-fi movie *Hardware* and 1992 horror *Dust Devil*, that impressed Marillion.

"He had a dark streak that suited the subject matter of *Brave*," says Peter Trewavas.

Kelly describes Stanley as "unusual – he used to go around saying things like 'hot diggity dog'. Actually, he was a bit fucking weird."

The band remained hands-off during the filming process. "He had a plan in his head and we knew bits of it, and other bits we didn't," says Trewavas. "I think he would tell us what we thought we needed to know to get the job done. It was pretty similar to how we were treating the record company at the time, actually," he adds with a laugh.

Josie Ayers in Richard Stanley's film based on *Brave*.

EMI/MARILLION/DIRECTOR: RICHARD STANLEY

The film starred actress Josie Ayers as the girl on the bridge. Following the broad arc of the album, it told her stories as a series of flashbacks, related as part of a psychiatry session. Marillion appeared as themselves in the film. But the band's plan to use the movie as a lavish promotional tool for the album was scuppered when it got held up by the censors at the British Board Of Film Classification.

"There was a lot of stuff about children being influenced by films at the time, and because it was a music video, they were particularly strict," says Kelly. "They weren't even going to give it a certificate to start with – they were just going to shitcan the whole thing and not allow us to release it. In the end, they removed quite a few scenes."

The band have mixed feelings about it today. "A lot of it works really well, and there's some very interesting and disturbing imagery," says Steve Rothery. "But ultimately it was never going to have the full cinematic appeal for that budget."

"It wasn't a very good film to be honest," says Kelly. "I'm not blaming Richard Stanley, because the budget he had to work with was minuscule. It could have worked really well with him making that movie. It just didn't." **DEV**

Q&A Peter Trewavas

The bassman cometh! Marillion's Steady Eddie four-stringer and resident "suspicious soul" went from being a new wave pop wannabe in a multicoloured jumpsuit to a cornerstone member of the band that have carried progressive rock into the future. But it hasn't been a smooth ride: there have been bumps, bust-ups and social media snubs along the way.

Words: Dave Everley **Portrait:** Kevin Nixon

Something is needling Peter Trewavas. "I don't have a blue tick on Twitter," he says of the social media site's coveted 'verified account' badge. "I think I'm the only person I know in a band who's on there who doesn't have one. It's been bugging me. Now if they gave me one, I'd ask them to take it away again."

Trewavas isn't really narked. Marillion's longtime bassist is far too easy going to let digital snubs get too him. Plus it's not as if his band haven't gone through long periods of being marginalised by the gatekeepers of cool.

"Oh, we know what it's like to be on the outside," says Trewavas. "We had years where no one wanted anything to do with us outside of our fans. But the last few years have been pretty incredible, even if we always knew how good we were."

The bassist is speaking from Marillion's Racket Club HQ, where he is taking a break from working on what will eventually become the band's 19th studio album, the follow-up to 2016's rapturously received *FEAR*.

"It's very early days," he says of the new material. "We're getting the gems together to put in the pot and sift through and see what goes with what. We're hoping for a winter birth, or an early spring 2021 one."

The Aylesbury raised Trewavas signed up with Marillion in early 1982, a few months after Mark Kelly. Inspired by Paul McCartney and jazz, his melodic yet complex basslines have been integral to their sound down the years, as have his backing vocals. Away from the band, he's racked up an impressive array of extra-curricular projects, including Kino, Edison's Children and prog rock royalty supergroup Transatlantic, the latter alongside ex-Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy, former Spock's Beard singer and keyboard player Neal Morse and The Flower Kings mainman Roine Stolt.

"What do I bring to Marillion?" he says. "I have no idea."

He's interrupted by a noise in the background. It's guitarist Steve Rothery, offering his own muffled answer

"Oh, my job's to make everybody else sound better, apparently," says the bassist, laughing. "And I think I do that rather well."

The Gong Show: Trewavas and the rest of Marillion at the 2015 Prog Awards.

JO HALE/GETTY IMAGES

You saw Marillion before you joined them. What were they like?

I saw them in 1981 at [legendary Aylesbury rock club] Friars, which is where everybody from David Bowie to Genesis used to play. They were very organic, very proggy, and I remember very vividly that they had these weird, druidy costumes on – they had a sound and a look that was really different. And of course Fish was larger than life, ploughing himself around the stage. Even then he was a very good frontman. Very sure of what he was doing and where he was going.

Pardon the pun, but were they big fish in the small pond of the Aylesbury rock scene?

They weren't a big deal but they were getting themselves noticed. I'd been in lots and lots of local bands, and one of the things local bands always struggled with was breaking out of that scene and into London. What Marillion did was to hire a publicist, Keith Goodwin. And that instantly got them little write-ups in the music papers – even if it wasn't really much, he could make it in to a story somehow. That got them noticed, and it allowed them to get further afield than other bands. It cost money, but they were backing themselves. When I first joined, I noticed that this was a band that knew what it wanted to do, and had a plan to get there.

You mentioned Friars. Was that your local club?

It was. I was brought up in Aylesbury from about the age of five, and I went there a lot. My sister, who was four years older than me, was given tickets to see David Bowie before he was famous, when it was just him and a guitar. But she decided not to go because she didn't really know who he was.

Genesis played there a few times. In fact, they famously

> We know what it's like to be on the outside. We had years where no one wanted anything to do with us.

Diamond geezer: Trewavas in 1999.

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came back in the late 70s/early 80s, when they were huge. Dave Stopps, the person who started Friars, decided that the fairest way to give the tickets out was for everybody just to have to queue up. So people were queuing up for a day in advance.

Did you get into the Genesis gig?
I didn't. Stupidly I queued up because my girlfriend, who is now my wife, was a massive Genesis fan, as was I. She queued up and I sat with her because I was her boyfriend, and that's what you did. "Yeah, it sounds like a bit of fun, hanging out with a load of people." But I wasn't going to go see the show. Genesis were all a bit new wave by then: "They've had their time." So I did the queuing, but not the show.

What kind of bands were you in before Marillion?
I was in pub bands. We'd get paid in beer. This was before I was old enough to even drink in pubs. They used to stick one behind the amp. It started out as shandy, then it was, "Go on then, he can have a pint."

But I was in two fairly well-known bands in Aylesbury, with my friend Robin Boult, who now plays with Howard Jones and Fish, funnily enough. One was called Orthi – we had an electric violinist and played folk-rock stuff. The other was The Metros. We actually went to America to try and make it big. We didn't.

The Metros were a new wave-style band. Did you have suits with big shoulder pads and Flock Of Seagulls haircuts?
Not quite. We had the hennaed hair, though, and we went down the jumpsuit route – those parachute suit things, all in different colours. We thought, "This is very sharp, this is very cool, this is going to be next year's thing." And it wasn't. Well, it was *our* next year's thing, but nobody else really got it.

You joined Marillion in 1982. Can you remember what you played at your audition?
I just joined in with them. What happened was that they needed a bass player 'cos they were going on tour the following week, and they needed someone to fill in. Fish and I kind of knew each other, 'cos he'd asked me a couple of times about gigs in the local area: what the local scene was like, who were the people he should get in contact with, all of that sort of stuff.

He came to see me playing this rock'n'roll night for the closure of one of the big bars in Aylesbury, and after the show he said, "I'd really like to ask you join my band, we've got a little tour lined up." I wasn't doing anything, because I'd just come back from playing in New York with The Metros and was signing on the dole, waiting to see what I was going to do next. He said: "You'll have to audition, but don't worry, you'll be fine."

So I went along to Victoria Street, brought my bass, and tuned up, which I think surprised them, 'cos apparently I tuned up quite professionally. We just played a few bits of *Chelsea Monday* and *Forgotten Sons*, maybe bits of *The Web*. Chord sequences that went round and round in vaguely progressive ways. Which is what I liked, really.

> "I do sing, but I'm not a frontman. Apart from anything, Steve's such a good singer, why would I want to do that?"

With Steve Hogarth: "I think it took him a while to be comfortable in Marillion."

PETER WAFZIG/GETTY IMAGES

Who were you closest to in those early days?
I was probably closest to Steve Rothery. We had a lot in common musically, and he was a quieter, gentler soul. He was probably the easiest person for me to relate to, because we were both guitar people. We found a few interesting things that we had in common, musically and otherwise. But when you're sat in a van for hours and hours on end for three or four weeks, you get to know everybody.

Picture the scene: you've just recorded *Market Square Heroes* and you're playing it back in the studio. Are you thinking: "This is it, we're going to be huge"?
Errrrm... no. I was probably thinking, "Does the bass sound good enough?" Occasionally, if you've done something amazing, you allow yourself to think that. But not often. We had a moment with *FEAR*, actually, where we all listened back to it in Real World studios, and we were looking at ourselves thinking, "This is actually really good." Nobody wanted to say, "This is the best thing we've ever done", but we were all feeling it.

With *Market Square Heroes*, it had been quite hard to get it where it was, from the point of view of getting us to play how the producer wanted it to sound. But we knew that we had *something*, at least.

Back then, you were endlessly compared to Genesis...
[Laughing] Oh yes! Thank you for reminding me!

But at the time, did it bring you down?
Yeah, it did. One of the main things that's changed in the music industry is that bands used to get signed at a very early stage of their careers, You go back and listen to the first album from a lot of bands, including us, and it's a band learning to be a band in the studio. It's inevitable that the bands that influenced you will come through. So with our first few attempts in a recording studio, there were definite pointers to the fact that we liked Genesis. There was on the first album, less so on the second album.

But the big problem is that once it's said, it becomes a cheap throwaway line that everybody can use: "Oh yeah, it sounds like Genesis." And that followed us around for so many years. Rightly or wrongly.

What do you remember about making *Fugazi*?
Script was an easier ride because we had most of the music. We wrote the title track in the studio, but most of the music, we toured in various shapes or forms, so we knew how to play it.

With *Fugazi*, we had to write it from scratch, and this was a band that had never really written that much music together – Mark joined after a fair amount of the first album was written, I joined after most of it was written, so there was that learning how to write together.

But it was a lot of fun. And Ian had just joined the band, so I was learning how to play with him – we were locking rhythms and grooves in. So that was really interesting for me, it was a real learning curve. Ian was at a different level to us. Bringing him into the band suddenly made us get up another level entirely.

What happened with the two drummers you had before Ian Mosley, Andy Ward and Jonathan Mover? Neither lasted very long.
Jonathan Mover seemed quite business minded – only 'cos we weren't really that interested. We were, like, "Sort out the music, then we'll work out the business side." And he was, like, "No, no, let's work it out beforehand." "No, we're just here to write."

> The main reason we're still together is because we get on so well. If we didn't, it wouldn't be worth doing it.

KEVIN NIXON

He was a great drummer, but he was probably too headstrong. You can't have more than one leader in a band.

Was Fish the leader?
If I'm honest, yes, I think that's a fair assumption. But we all had a say. And some members of the band, probably myself included, can be quite stubborn if they don't want to do something. But you've got to be headstrong. If you're not that sort of person, then you're not going to get where we ended up getting to, you're going to fall by the wayside.

Do you enjoy the level of fame that came with *Kayleigh* and *Misplaced Childhood*?
I enjoyed some of it. It's great to suddenly have a record company that throws doors open for you. If we needed to be somewhere, money was no object. If we needed a private jet to get back from a show to play *Top Of The Pops*, we were on it. Luton Airport once stayed open so we could land a plane. Stuff like that, you look back and think, "Wow."

You supported Queen. What was that experience like?
Oh, just to be doing it was amazing. It was amazing and scary at the same time.

Did you hang out with them?
Yeah, we did. I didn't really spend any time with Freddie Mercury. I was in the same room as him, which is more than a lot of people got, but not to the point of sitting down and chatting, whereas I did with the other three. Roger and Brian, lovely people. And John Deacon as well. What a fantastic bass player John Deacon is, by the way. Never plays a note wrong. And the construction of his basslines are far-out.

Did Fish leaving bring the four of you closer?
We were pretty close anyway, and maybe that sometimes alienated Fish, because we had all had a musical language we could speak. Fish wasn't as musical, and wasn't always as able to express himself musically as articulately.

If Steve Hogarth hadn't have taken the job, who would you have gone for? Was there another person you had in mind?
No. I think there was an Irish singer that the record company had in mind, but he was in a band. The trouble is, all the singers we considered to be any good were all in bands in anyway.

Peter Trewavas giving it the full "suspicious soul" look.

It feels like he took a while to be comfortable with being the singer in Marillion...
I think it took him a while. There were a couple of things we tried to do to ease Steve's mind, and ours as well, probably. We did a secret gig, which wasn't as secret as we thought, at the Crooked Billet near Reading. That seemed to go down really well, but then again, that was the first time we'd played live for a year and a half and we were in a tiny little pub. I can see where the draw might be there. But that was the first time Steve was showcased, if you like.

When you walked offstage, was that the point where you thought: "This is going to be alright"?
We assumed it would be before. We'd rehearsed and we all thought what we had was good.

How was the 90s for you.
The 90s was... interesting. It was a tricky time, because we left EMI in 1996, after *Afraid Of Sunlight*. We thought we'd done a great album, but it didn't seem to be what EMI wanted. We kind of knew it was the end of the road. We'd renegotiated when we were in a position of power, and it just got expensive for them. And also at the time, record companies were still blasé about sales.,"Oh, under a million is nothing." These days they'd bite your hand off for a million sales.

When Mark presented you with the crowdfunding idea, what did you think: "This could work"? Or: "That's just crazy."
I thought it could work, but I also had my reservations. Being a suspicious soul, my first thought was, "Nobody gives you money for nothing, so what's their pound of flesh? Are they going to say what kind of songs we can write?" And Mark said, "No, no, we just tell them exactly what we're going to do."

So we made ground rules. The main thing was: "The music is down to us and no one has a say in that." Whatever people think they want, when they listen to what we actually deliver, it'll be much better and much stronger. That's how we treated record companies before. As soon as we had a hit with *Kayleigh*, singles were the first thing to be mentioned by EMI and every other record company. We were, like, "No, we're making the music we want to make."

Is it overstating it to say that crowdfunding saved Marillion?
I think it gave us a way forward, and we were lucky enough to be at the forefront of that. It helped that we had internet presence before that. The last album we did before *Anaroknaphobia* was called *Marillion.com*, specifically designed to draw people to the website. Most people in those days didn't really understand what a website was, or could do for you. We realised that having a website and collecting names and addresses was a big leap forward for us. Just being able to contact people directly without having to put stamps on envelopes was very helpful.

Your backing vocals are a big part of what Marillion do. Is there ever part of you that really fancies being a frontman?
Well, I do sing with other bands too, but I'm not really a main frontman. I'm not comfortable in that role. I need a prop. I'm so comfortable on the bass guitar. And apart from anything else, Steve's such a good singer, why would I want to do that?

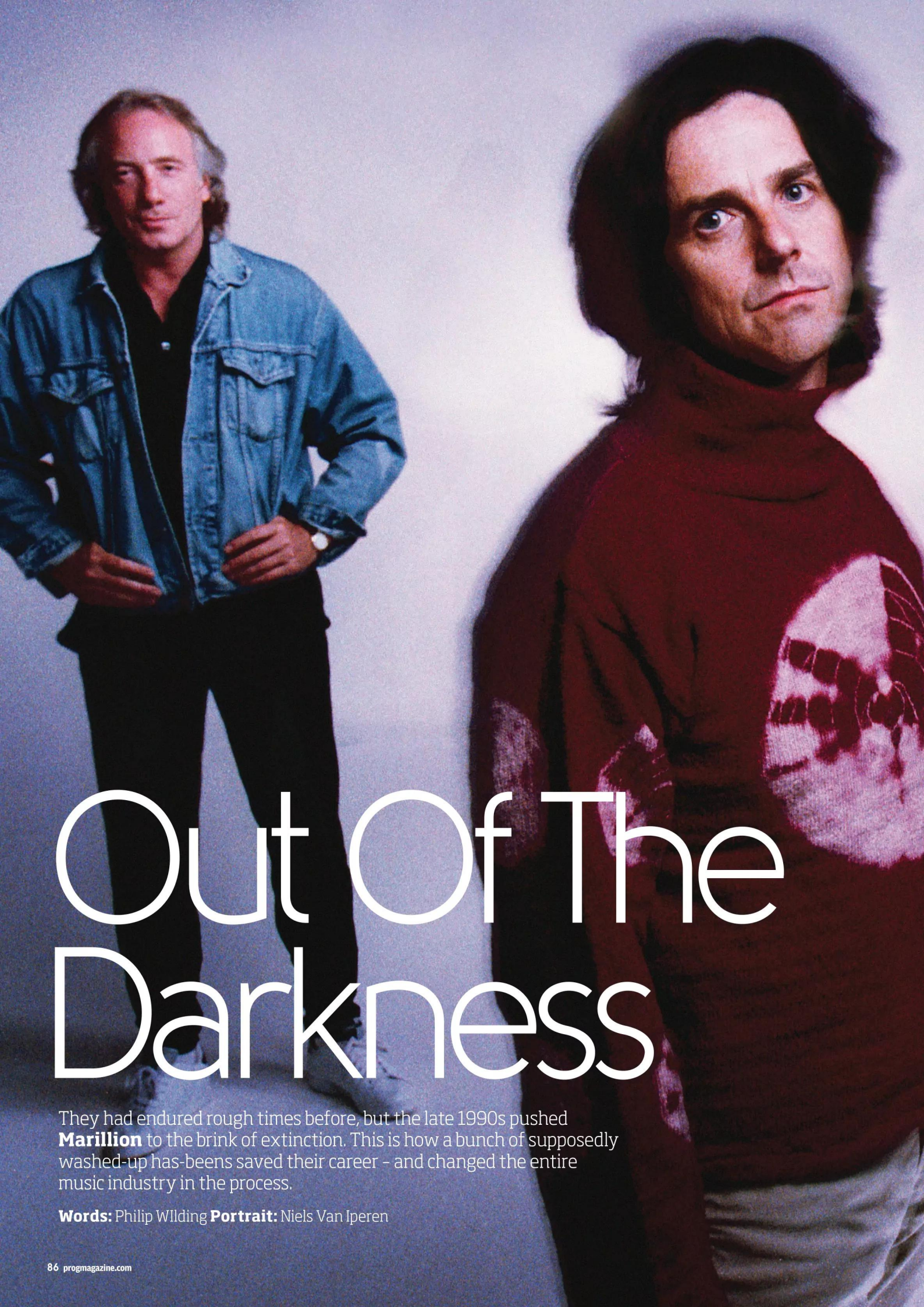
What's guaranteed to get the five of you arguing?
Arguing? Blimey, I don't know. We don't argue about much really. The main reason why we're still together is because we get on so well. If we weren't good friends, it wouldn't be worth doing it.

What's your personal favourite Marillion album?
That's tough. It's either *Afraid Of Sunlight* or *Sounds That Can't Be Made*. They've got some great songs on them. But I think it terms of an overall album, sound and production and everything, then *FEAR* is probably the best thing we've done.

Lesser bands would have knocked it on the head. What's different about Marillion?
I guess we just weren't going to go away. We enjoyed what we did and we thought it was relevant, and it was relevant to our fans. Just stubbornness, I suppose.

What's best: being in Marillion in 1985 or being in Marillion now?
Oh, now. Because we know that we've done it ourselves. Back in 1985, I was always a bit suspicious that the record company could have taken any band and put them where we were, it was just our turn.

Have they given you the keys to the town of Aylesbury yet?
No, I don't think they have. I'll write them a stern email and ask why not.



Out Of The Darkness

They had endured rough times before, but the late 1990s pushed **Marillion** to the brink of extinction. This is how a bunch of supposedly washed-up has-beens saved their career - and changed the entire music industry in the process.

Words: Philip WIlding **Portrait:** Niels Van Iperen

If you want to know the truth of it, the trouble really began around ten years before with the *Brave* album. Marillion's ambitious 1994 concept album. An excellent and expansive piece about life, death and memory loss that went over budget, ran out of time and tore the band and their label, EMI, apart in a way that made Harry and Meghan's exit from the Royal Family look sedate. In its own way, *Brave* had pulled the Steve Hogarth-era Marillion together but looked to have punched a hole through the band's future plans.

"From our point of view,*Brave* had been a success," says bassist Pete Trewavas, "because we made an album that we really, really liked. We'd had problems in our working relationship with Steve [Hogarth] in the studio for the *Holidays In Eden* record, just getting to know each other personally and how we worked as a band, but by *Brave* which was a lot of his initial ideas, we were in a good place creatively and as people."

That wasn't how EMI saw it. The album was delivered late and, in classic A&R man parlance, the label couldn't hear a single. *Brave* reached No.10 in the UK charts – impressive, bu their lowest charting album in years. The band seemed to take their label's concerns onboard – they followed it with the shimmering *Afraid Of Sunlight*, on time, under budget and brimming with songs that *could* have been singles. But the damage was done. Marillion were dropped.

"We thought if we do deliver a killer album then we'd be alright," says Trewavas. "You must remember, we'd been through all of that with *Misplaced Childhood* – that was going to be the last album for EMI. At one point they said, 'The third album really has to make money as it had cost a lot to make', and then after *Kayleigh*, they were rubbing their hands together thinking, 'We've got a band that can write singles here.' And then we delivered an album like *Brave* and they didn't know what to do with that."

Marillion were nothing if not resilient. They were written after the departure of singer Fish, though as his career path waxed and waned, it was Marillion Mark II that helped create the template for the modern rock band. They curated weekends around the

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"Anyone got 10p?": the exact point when Marillion's finances reached rock bottom.

world, set up both an in-house studio/rehearsal facility with minimal overheads and their own Racket Records imprint, and pioneered a now familiar crowdfunding strategy that revolutionised the music industry. Their efforts paid off handsomely – 2016's *FEAR* became their most successful album in 30 years.

That must have seemed like an awfully long way off in the autumn of 1996. After their split with EMI post-*Afraid Of Sunlight*, the band signed with Raw Power, an imprint of British independent label Castle Communications – home of such unlikely bedfellows as WASP, Helloween and Ugly Kid Joe.

Even after the commercial and critical success of the 80s, Marillion were still a band who needed to work. Luckily, they had the foresight to take the advance they received for *Brave* and plough it into creating the embryonic studio space that would eventually become their Racket Club HQ.

"We made a good decision getting the Racket Club and buying equipment rather than just using it to record a new album," says Kelly, "we actually said, 'Ok, we're going to build our own recording studio, it's not going to be as good, but we'll be self-sufficient.' And that got us through the second half of the 90s."

One thing that wouldn't survive the decade was their relationship with longtime manager John Arnison, who had worked with the band since their 1983 debut *Script For A Jester's Tear*. While the band were determined to see things through, even with an increasingly apparent lack of any real promotion from their new label and an audience that was becoming more selective, Arnison seemingly wasn't.

"I don't think any of us ever felt like calling it a day," says Ian Mosley, "but John, the manager, definitely felt that. He said to me one day, 'You should think of doing Marillion six months of the year and doing something else for the rest of the year.'"

"I think his phrase was, 'You're not going to earn enough from the band going forward,'" says Kelly. "We went, 'Fuck that, you're not one of the team anymore.' I don't think he believed we had a future anymore and so we fired him. I suppose it's like companies that fail – you can see how it happens. It takes you a while to wake up to the reality that things aren't as good as they used to be. You have to start trimming things back to what you can afford and try and stay profitable. I know that sounds like business talk, but that's really what it comes down to. And we weren't businessmen, we were musicians. So, we struggled a bit."

> "The manager said, 'You should think of finding something else to do for the rest of the year.' He didn't believe we had a future anymore, so we fired him."
>
> **Mark Kelly**

"You must remember," says guitarist Steve Rothery, "We did nothing to promote the *Afraid Of Sunlight* album, did no press, it escaped more than it was released. But then we released *This Strange Engine* on Castle and saw the difference of even a major label doing a crap job and an independent, who are releasing on different labels in each territory, to see the difference that makes; to go from selling 250,000 to half that within one record, that's when the alarm bells can ring."

Mark Kelly recalls 1997 being the bands worst period financially. It felt like Marillion were in the doldrums as the decade made its way listlessly to its end.

"We felt like we were on a treadmill, trying to turn out an album a year and tour it. We were trying different things – we did a university tour to get a younger audience. We were floundering. I'll be honest, I look back at those three albums and I can't remember which songs are on which."

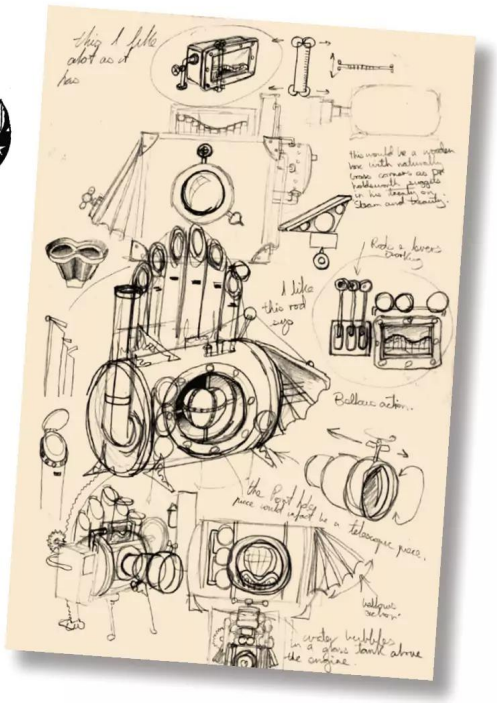
The three albums Marillion released in the second half of the 1990s – 1997's *This Strange Engine*, 1998's *Radiation* and 1999's *Marillion.com* – may not scale the critical and commercial heights of an album such as *Afraid Of Sunlight*, let alone some of its more celebrated predecessors, but given their besieged mindset, financial insecurities and the encroaching feeling that they were somehow falling behind, there's much to recommend about them.

When the band talk about it now, they admit to the period being something of a blur, not least because it was something of a throwback to the 70s: get an advance on the album, make the record, tour the record, make enough money for the label to recoup their cash so they can advance you for the next one and off you go again.

"We didn't have the usual time we liked to write, the recording and the writing was all done within a year, it was unheard of for us," says Rothery. "There are some great songs on those albums. Maybe they could have been better or more developed and polished if we'd had another six months to work with. There was change. You can't help but have some sense of panic – at that point I did sell quite a lot of equipment just to pay tax bills and the mortgage. I got rid of quite a few guitars and bits and pieces, which I do regret now.

"Our fans," says Mosley, "if they know we've got an album out, they'll find it, even if it was under a rock somewhere. We felt that the indies weren't actually giving us any proper promotion, they just thought, 'A Marillion album, it's a license to print money.' So that's what I felt like. It was a bit of a grey area in our career."

"Castle Communications had this business model: mop up all the medium sized bands that were selling but not enough for the majors to want them," says Kelly. "By the time we go to the end of that period that was, we were like, 'We want out of this now.' They came to us and offered us another deal. We'd been with [Iron Maiden's management company] Sanctuary, who were managing us, but without a contract, and then Rod [Smallwood, Sanctuary boss] bought Castle and wanted to sign us to that. We said, 'Fuck that, we're not signing a record deal with our management company.'"



Eat your heart out, Heath Robinson: sketches for *This Strange Engine*.

Though it had the ignominy of being their first album without a single to touch the UK Top 40, *This Strange Engine* still bristles with life, showcasing Marillion's familiar scope of musical ambition, not least in the epic title track, often the encore at many of the band's live shows. Ditto the thrumming *Man Of A Thousand Faces*, Hogarth's hymn to his father.

"He was a sailor and he used to sail around the tropics," Hogarth said at the time of the inspiration behind the song. "He ultimately gave up this job in the Navy to come back to England and to us to work down a mine. He literally went from the sunset on the equator to the blackness of being under the ground digging out coal.

"Recently I've been revisiting those memories of just what an enormous sacrifice it was. I am often faced with similar decisions myself. I don't see too much of my children. I wander about the world being treated like a king and I wanted to let him know that he is a better man than I am."

What *This Strange Engine* also gave them was their first taste of the sort of crowd funding that would ultimately come to save their careers. Kelly, a man happy in the digital realm before anyone had even thought to coin the phrase (his TEDx talk on the origin of crowdfunding is worth 20 minutes of anyone's time), found himself lurking – his own words – anonymo,usly on the band's online Freaks mailing list.

"It was the pre-Facebook era"

That sinking feeling: the view from the porthole of the Good Ship Marillion in the late 90s.

says Kelly. "People used to communicate via mailing lists. And someone asked the question, would we be touring in the States, and I said, 'No, we've just left EMI, and whenever we toured America, we always lost money, and the record company footed the bill.'"

As Marillion found out – and would continue to find out – if there's one thing that their fans have, it's endeavour in spades. Given Kelly's dismissal of the idea of a US tour, an American based fan called Jeff Pelletier simply took Kelly's words as some sort of challenge and, together with another fan, Jeff Woods, set about raising the cash needed to get Marillion across the Atlantic to play the USA.

"Well, the next question was, how much would you lose?" says Kelly, "And I said, 'Well, maybe 50 or 60,000 dollars', thinking that would put an end to the conversation, and then this guy [Jeff Pelletier] said, 'Well, why don't we raise the money?' And then some other guy said, 'Yeah, I said I can open a bank account and put some money into an escrow account, and if the tour doesn't happen, I'll just give the money back to everybody.' I was slightly concerned, but I was thinking that not much would happen. They raised about $20,000 in the first week, then I had to go and tell the rest of the band..."

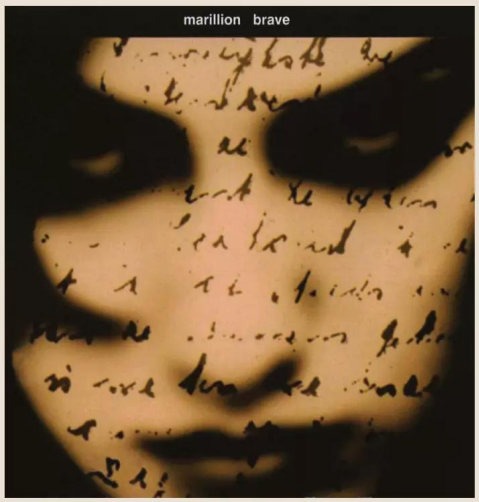
"I was in Los Angeles at the time," says Ian Mosley, "and Mark had called me to tell me about this proposed tour fund, but I thought no more about it, not a chance, you know? And then Mark rang again a few weeks later, and said, 'He's raised some ridiculous amount of money.' That was the beginning. And we toured America."

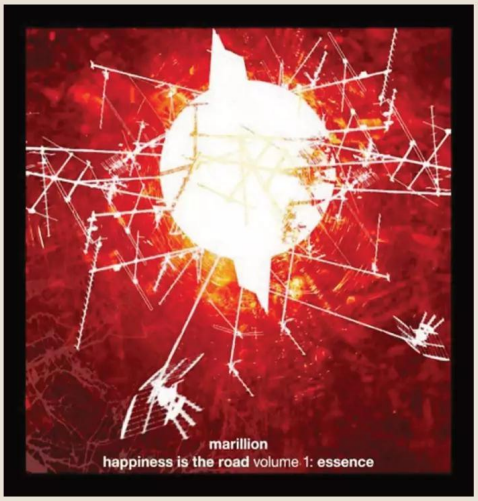
"I remember the band promising a live CD to fans," says Erik Nielsen, Marillion's former Business Manager and now part of music industry powerhouse Wingnut Music. "This was just before the tour to help spur on extra donations, but we definitely sent it out some time after those dates ended as something we could give back to anyone who had helped."

The band may have been fumbling about in the dark, but they had unwittingly, come up with the business model that would not only help bail out their careers, but set their creative spirit free and lead to some of the most compelling and celebrated records of their career.

"Strange, isn't it," says Kelly. "It didn't seem like such a big deal. I was the one that suggested it, and it wasn't really a masterplan – there wasn't even a new album at that point. Ian knew, but I hadn't even told the rest of the band, as it was such a crazy idea and I didn't think it was going to come to anything."

Back home things were less clear,





Goodbye To All That

Marillion's 80s sleeves were iconic - but so were the covers of their 90s and 00s albums. Steve Hogarth reveals how the band had to change the way they presented themselves to the world via their cover imagery.

With a protracted and cripplingly expensive legal battle with former frontman Fish and an incredible amount of ill will on both sides, Marillion were stuck between a rock and hard place. Did they carry on with the visual artwork and imagery which had become synonymous with them, or did they ditch it completely?

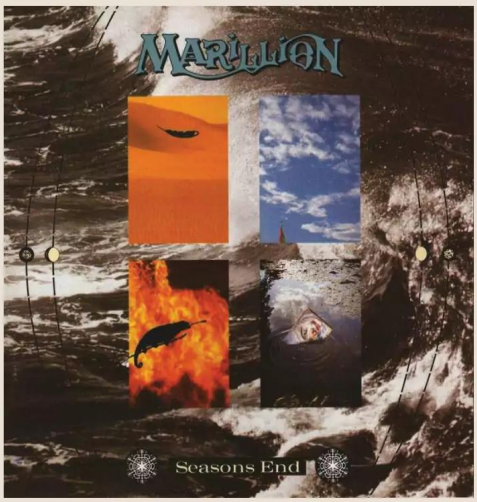
"Looking back now I would have changed the name of the band and gone further with the artwork," says Steve Hogarth, the man who joined the band in 1989. "But I think it was a huge point of pride with the band after Fish, I think they were fucked if they were going to let him have the name. We kept the old logo too, and if that could have gone straight away then that wouldn't have bothered me a bit.

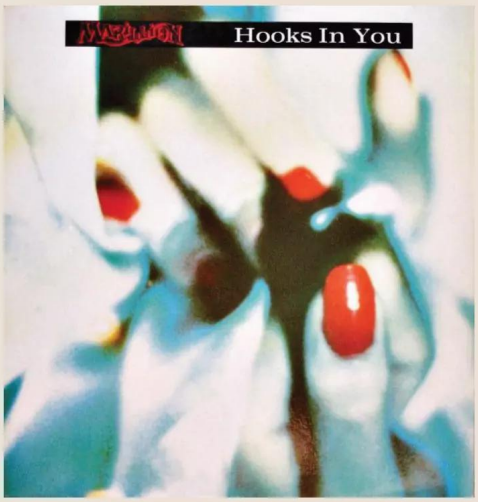
"The imagery; the jester, the chameleon on *Seasons*, I think that was part of the record company's brief. I can't be certain, but I think there was some of that, the crossover thing to keep the old fans sweet. Saying that, I do like it, I liked the four elements, the plates, and I liked the rolling sea. Parts of it looked great."

It wouldn't be until be two albums later, with 1994's *Brave*, when everything fell into place. *Brave* lived up to its billing, a concept album in an era when the notion of one was enough to make some music critics weep. It was Marillion at their most haunting and inventive, the richness of their music reflected in the enigmatic face that stared out from the album's sleeve. Except that one of their most vibrant and celebrated sleeves was something of a happy accident.

"*Brave* was the first album where we'd grown into each other," says Hogarth. "It felt like our first proper album in a way. The cover and the logo felt like that too, something new. There was a lot of back and forth over the artwork, the back cover with the squares of the girl, that was going to be the cover for so long and then out of the blue

> Looking back, I would have changed the band name and taken the artwork further.
>
> **Steve Hogarth**





we were up in Liverpool mixing the album and Bill Smith came to see us with that face with the writing on it and we were blown away. It really was changed at the last minute. To me that cover really looks like the album sounds. Poor Carl [Glover, *Brave* sleeve designer] had spent however long on the back cover and then Bill just turned up with this girl's face and we took that."

Brave might have seen the band unified by an image, but when it came to choosing the sleeve for *Afraid Of Sunlight*, Hogarth, by his own admission, threw his toys out of the pram.

"Oh yeah," he sighs. "A similar thing happened with *Afraid Of Sunlight*, the back was meant to be the front on that too, originally. The image of the Jesus statue that overlooks Rio, very famous figure, you know, I wanted to use that on the cover. As much as you can almost leave a band over the album cover, I did almost leave over that!

"We had a real difference of opinion. One member of the band who shall remain nameless – hell, it was Mark Kelly – he didn't like it, he thought it looked like a Christian rock record. He wouldn't have it and I got outvoted on it. I was really upset about that, I still am. Then Bill and Carl came back with the image of the boy – it's actually Bill's son. It's strong, but to this day I'm still annoyed about it, but it's a democratic band. I think we bottled it a bit. The cover we rejected, maybe because it was too vibrant, too colourful, the day-glo aspect, too modern. Maybe that was the last vestiges of fear of how we were perceived as a band?"

All such fears had been abated by the time it came to the making of the *Anoraknophobia* album, with its strong primary colours and dynamic, hooded figure on its cover it was a million aesthetic miles from something like *Fugazi*. But Marillion being Marillion meant that it wasn't without its problems.

"The label got the company in who did that and they brought in the little figure holding the car aerial and we loved him," says Hogarth, happily, "But they came back and they'd changed him and taken the aerial away, so we insisted that they put it all back the way it had been and so they did, and without a word, I must say.

"It transpired that they'd nicked it from a Japanese ad for a car security system or something, he was meant to be a thief, hence the wire aerial. But instead of telling the band or the label that they didn't say a word and the label got sued! It was all very odd – at the end of it all we got what we wanted, but I doubt the design company did."

Hogarth admits to being disappointed by the execution of the artwork for both *This Strange Engine* and *Radiation* ("neither album felt like it was well served by its sleeve"). And he says he's still mystified as to why so many of their sleeves, "are all so bloody brown! I'd be sitting in meetings going, this cover's brown again!" Though, he feels that the ambition and scope of the band's 2011 album *Happiness Is The Road* was matched by its artwork.

"For *Happiness Is the Road* we used this Spanish artist called Antonio Seijas. He came backstage after a gig and gave us this calendar he'd done and it looked great," Hogarth recalls. "It was this sort of conceptual, neo-progressive style, not a pastiche at all. So when we decided to make this ultimate package for the album we were looking at getting something like 110 pieces of artwork in there, just ridiculous! So we needed someone who could do it quickly and it wouldn't cost a million quid. I'm not sure how he kept to the deadline, but he did it and he did such a great job too."

And it's not brown either.

Made Again

Carl Glover is the man who now handles most of Marillion's ever more abstract artwork...

"I was at Bill Smith Studios [acclaimed album cover designer's former HQ]," says Carl Glover, the man who is very much an integral part of the images and art associated with latter-day Marillion. "Bill would bring projects in and dump them on various desks, I think I got Marillion, King Crimson and Led Zeppelin at the same time. I knew their name, but not their stuff so much."

Season's End was Carl's first project for the band and as another new boy he shared Hogarth's vision for making Marillion over.

"No matter what we did with that first album, some people will always think of Marillion as Fish and Mark Wilkinson, and with the music they were making the jester figure made perfect sense. You can tell that *Season's End* was a transition, the jester, the chameleon, the original logo, the real ale logo as I call it. I'm a little bit 'scorched earth' in my own way, I was all for reinventing the band through the artwork, but that only happened when they got to *Brave*.

"I don't think *Season's End* worked as a cover, it should have been far more left-field. Someone told me that Wilkinson thought it was a slight, but I don't know that he did. I was told to use elements of their past, the thematic content, but it just seemed like so much baggage. Given the choice I would have gone straight to the *Brave* style of things, with a new logo straight away.

"For me, *Marbles* was very gratifying. The two kids who make up the cover are my sister's kids and we shot that cover in her garden against a piece of black velvet while my sister burned her plastic garden furniture. I remember having the meetings for that cover in the old pub where Tolkien used to drink in Oxford [The Eagle and Child]. It was a hot summer and we talked about doing an 128-page book for it.

"I've got dozens of rejected artwork pieces from that album, though the stuff that they took for the vinyl version is amazing. I was working out in the Mojave desert on another job so I took the marble with me and shot it against incredible backgrounds. The combination is just mesmerising.

"That's the thing about music now, as everyone does file sharing you have to make the artwork look great just so that people want the full thing. You want the image to be powerful enough that it pulls you in even before you've heard the music." **PW**

> Marbles was very gratifying. We shot the cover in my sister's garden against some black velvet while she burned her plastic garden furniture.

PRESS

Carl Glover: scorched earthling.

not least for Steve Hogarth, a singer never afraid of prostrating himself on the emotional altar. 1998's *Radiation* album is remarkable in many respects, not least the jarring honesty in Hogarth's lyrics. The singer was going through a messy divorce due to his infidelity, and he was, by his own admission, crashing around at home, still with his partner, but living together alone.

There was also the matter of the fact that while holed up in the Racket Club and with the notion, possibly fuelled by lack of funds, the band decided to self-produce. Consequently, the original mix of the album is the equivalent of listening to a record through a neighbour's wall. The nuances of a song like the aching *Now She'll Never Know* or the brooding lament that is *These Chains* are either drowned in the murk or lost to the ether. It wasn't until 2013 and Michael Hunter's remix that the most people realised how rich and complex *Radiation* was.

"I know exactly what you mean about *Radiation*", says Mosley. "I didn't like the production to the point where I literally couldn't listen to it. But when Mike Hunter remixed it, I thought, 'Bloody hell, there's some really good stuff on here."

"These days, we've gone back to working with people like Dave Meegan and Michael Hunter," says Kelly, "Dave was involved with *Brave*, *...Sunlight*, *This Strange Engine*, and then we tried a couple of our own and that went a bit pear shaped and then we went back to working with producers."

The album dragged itself to No.35 in the UK charts then quickly dropped out of sight, while the remarkable, if muddy sounding, *These Chains* struggled to No. 78 before disappearing. No wonder the band were in turmoil – even if Hogarth's was of his own making – but go back now and there are gems in every record, whether the band were capable of seeing them or not.

Picture the scene: it's 2017 and it's the third and final night of Marillion's sell-out weekend at Center Parcs in

Port Zélande. the band are ending their final show by playing *marillion.com* in its entirety. Despite the presence of the In Praise Of Folly string quartet dressed as four eerie Miss Havershams, plus guest appearances by sax and trumpet players (Phil Todd and Neil Yates) and sometime Marillion lyricist John Helmer, it was my least anticipated night of the three. At the time, *Marilion.com* had left me cold. A looser, more ambitious album than anything the band had recorded before, it even featured some trip hop and, as I recalled, quite a lot of sax and quite a lot less prog – or at least the kind of prog I'd come to associate Marillion with.

But that night the album shone brilliantly and made me re-examine the music from a period when Marillion were in a state of flux and, perhaps, on the verge of giving up on themselves. It's said art often comes from adversity, and whatever the driving force, the impetus provided by the crowdfunded US tour, or the spark of survival, but with hindsight, Marillion.com was the sound of a band rising gracefully above adversity.

At the time of its original release, *Marillion.com* came with the offer of a free bonus disc in exchange for your personal details ending up on the band's mailing list. As the album's title suggested, the future was online – and it was bright.

"I remember we were getting ready to start work on what would become [2001's] *Anoraknophonbia*," says Ian Mosley, "And it was Mark that said, 'Let's email all the fans and see what they think about this idea or giving us some money upfront before we've written or recorded a note.' All I could think was, it's worth a shot. We had about 12 or 13,000 fans, and they donated money. People from all round the world, which was unbelievable. It really felt like we had freedom to do what we wanted again."

Tellingly, the band opted to put the record on their short-lived Liberty imprint. It might not have broken any sales records, but it did prove to the band that there were at least 13,000 fans who were willing to fund the work Marillion did before they'd even

Heads you win: Marillion in 1999.

> "It was Mark who said, 'Let's email all the fans and see what they think about the idea of giving us some money before we've written or recorded a note.' All I could think was, 'It's worth a shot.'"
>
> **Ian Mosley**

ALL PRESS

stepped into a studio. It also, literally, changed the way bands started to make and release music. There's a music business module you can study that uses the Marillion template as its model. "Like there was a template!" laughs Kelly.

Anoraknophonbia became the infrastructure for a new way of doing business, but it was 2004's *Marbles* record that really cemented their place at the forefront of the music industry's new dawn.

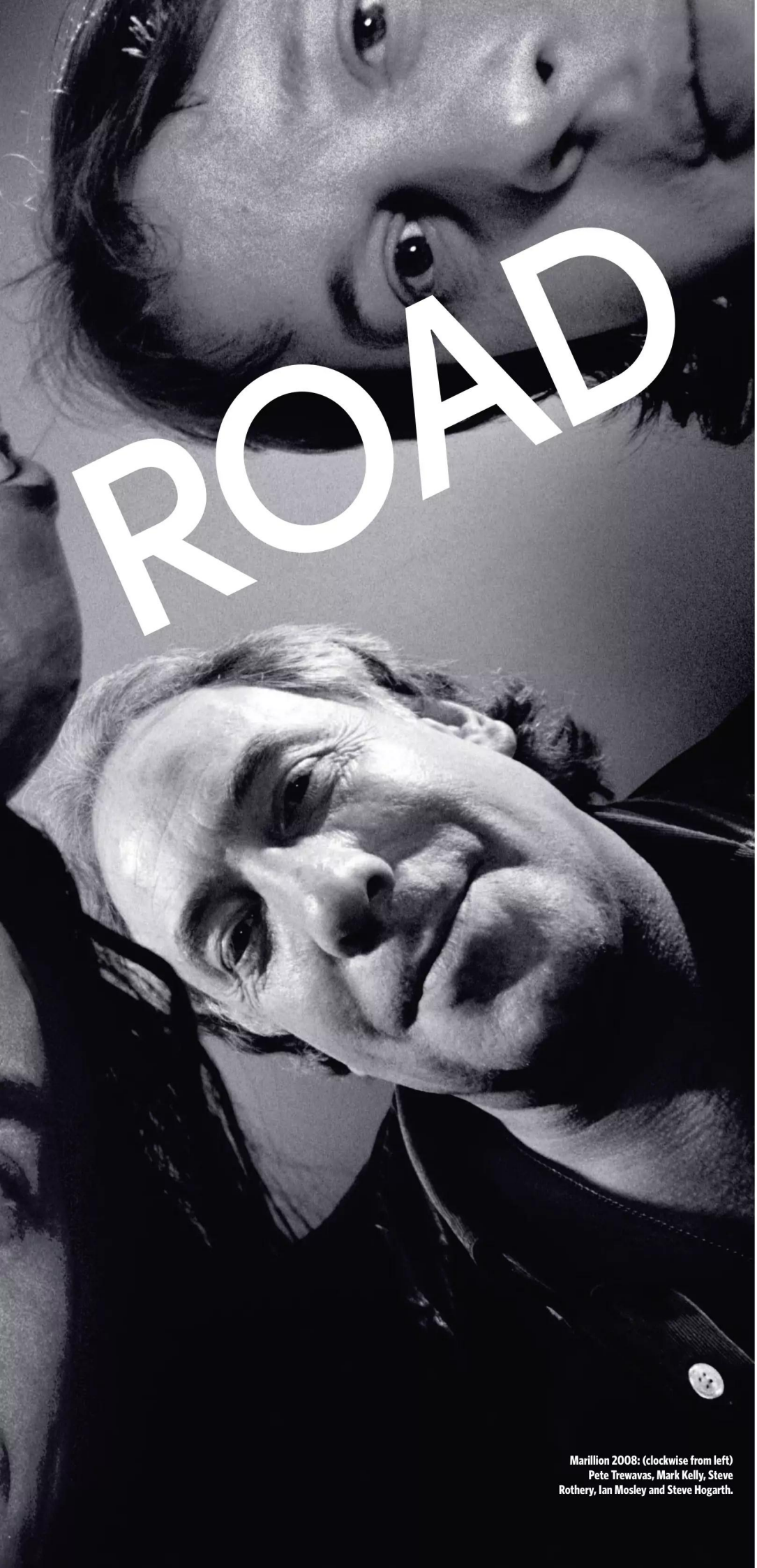
"The first time we did it, it was great and successful, but it wasn't huge," says Kelly, "But we felt like, 'Oh, this is a new way of working.' By the time we made *Marbles*, we were feeling confident. It was really well received by fans, and we had a Top 10 hit with *You're Gone*, so we could tell that things had taken a turn for the better and we were going to be OK."

"Looking back," says Trewavas, "I think the songs we wrote and the records we made [with Castle] were good. I think they're a little bit missed for a lot of people. But, ultimately, I think as soon as we started to trust our judgement and become masters of our own destiny, that was when things started to get better for us. It was just that moment of believing in and betting on ourselves."

THE LONG

It's 2008, and the rejuvenated **Marillion** are recording their double album *Happiness Is The Road*. All is going swimmingly. And then they invite a *Classic Rock* journalist to play tambourine on it…

Words: Jon Hotten **Portrait:** Niels van Iperen



Marillion 2008: (clockwise from left) Pete Trewavas, Mark Kelly, Steve Rothery, Ian Mosley and Steve Hogarth.

It was the day the music died. Or rather it was the day the music journalist died – just a little… on the inside.

It is May 2008. At Marillion's studio, tucked away in the rural idyll of Buckinghamshire, where the band have been working on an album called *Happiness Is The Road* for eight months. They were supposed to have finished it in April, but it has taken on a life of its own and they have two more months to go. Their producer, Michael Hunter, has bowed to the inevitable, left home and moved in, taking up residence on a double bed a few feet from the chair he occupies for many hours of the day. Hunter wears the look of man who has not seen sunlight for a very long time.

"I try to walk to the village every morning," he says plaintively. "'If I get the chance."

Today will not be that day, though, because today is not a normal day, for Mike Hunter or for anybody else here. Because today Marillion are going to do something unprecedented: they are going to allow a competition winner called Dawn to play on their record. On top of that, they are going to let a journalist play on it, too.

Marillion seem relaxed enough as they arrive for this day of days. In the tiny kitchen, Pete Trewavas puts the kettle on. Mark Kelly squeezes dressing onto his salad. Ian Mosley spills coffee down his white shirt, perhaps because he is in a darkened room and has forgotten to take off his sunglasses. Steve Rothery lugs several guitar-shaped cardboard boxes from his car into the studio.

Steve Hogarth is the last to appear, having done battle with the M4 after a night in London. He is frazzled from the traffic, and from having seen a policeman walking along Kensington High Street holding a machine gun. The incident has tripped memories of a Marillion tour of Brazil, during which the promoters employed an off-duty policeman as a security guard for the band. He was moonlighting from his day job chasing drug gangs in Rio De Janeiro. The guard was the last of his squad left alive.

Dawn, who has beaten thousands of competition entrants for this chance, is to go first. She's playing finger cymbals on a track called *Essence*. It's a nice touch: the finger cymbal is one of Marillion's quirky signatures, a little chime heard on many of their albums. She is led through to the studio while the band watch through the glass of the control room. If she's going to crack under the pressure, it will be now. But she doesn't. She nails it after three or four goes, despite never having been in a recording studio before and having quite a complex count-in to deal with.

"We thought you could play the tambourine," says Mark Kelly, turning to me. "Should be easy, shouldn't it? You've been in enough recording studios."

This is true, but all people seem to do in them is sit around on sofas, drinking and burping. This does nothing to equip you for the moment when you're taken into a booth, given a pair of headphones and handed a musical instrument you have no experience of playing. Still, the tambourine, eh? How hard can it be? Anyone can play a tambourine.

Mike Hunter presses a button and the

music begins. A line of grinning, gurning faces stare through the control room glass.

Playing the tambourine is hard. It doesn't sound hard. It doesn't look hard. But it *is* hard. The problem is the bells that jingle as the tambourine is waved back and forth. If it's waved too quickly, they don't jingle. If it's not waved quickly enough, they jingle too slowly.

The music in the headphones is so loud that the jingles of the tambourine sound as if they're coming from deep underwater; tiny, muffled 'tinks' from the far distance.

The music stops abruptly. Mark Kelly's voice comes over the intercom.

"Are you right handed, Jon?"

"Yes"

"Sorry, it sounds like you're playing a left handed one."

There is extended laughter from behind the glass. Everyone seems to be enjoying the tambourine playing enormously, except for me. An unpleasant fear-sweat takes hold. The music begins again.

"It's a simple 11/8 with a 3/4 bridge and a 9/8 solo, okay?" Hunter tells Hotten his chops.

Mr tambourine man: *Classic Rock*'s Jon Hotten puts the gloss on Marillion's new album.

WILL IRELAND/FUTURENET

'Effortless' is not the adjective Marillion or Michael Hunter would apply to their working methods. There is a romantic notion that creativity should come easily, but it does not. It's 90 per cent perspiration, digging around in the psychic dirt, mining for nuggets that come along only occasionally and that must be polished and burnished. There are no short-cuts. At work on their fifteenth album, Marillion know this. They begin each day with a 30 minute jam, the results of which are rigorously catalogued by Mike Hunter.

"Sometimes," Kelly confides, "it's just rubbish."

"You have to kind of get that out the way," says Pete Trewavas. "Then we play something and someone will go: 'Remember that little bit we did on Tuesday?' or whatever. 'This will go with that.' Then Mike might dig it out and we'll put it together."

Sections of music are painstakingly constructed. Slowly they become songs.

The death rattle of the tambourine goes on. Steve Hogarth leaves the studio. Minutes later he bursts back in, holding a gun. At first it seems like a joke. But then he keeps waving it around. Maybe he got it in Rio. They'll sell you anything there. He holds it up. It looks real.

"Put it next to his head," suggests *Classic Rock*'s photographer, unhelpfully. "Do it execution style."

He does. Very slowly, he says: "Just… put… the… tambourine… down… now… please."

There is a pause. Then he laughs, and so does everyone else.

"Had you going, didn't I?" he says.

"I thought you didn't like guns," I mutter.

"This one's good though," he says. "Looks real."

"Yeah," says Mark Kelly. "Be a nice headline for the mag, too: 'Journalist shot after crap tambourine session ruins album'."

Everyone laughs again.

"Okay, I think we've got enough now," says Mike Hunter. "Would you like to hear that back?"

We do. Through the control room glass a line of heads shake and wobble with merriment. Mike places a consolatory hand on my shoulder. "Don't worry about it," he says. "We've got this programme called Pro-Tools. You only have to actually come up with one good tambourine shake and we can capture it and move it in time with the music. Honestly, it'll sound alright. Promise."

"That's what he tells everyone," says Ian Mosley.

One Saturday towards the end of August, a package drops through my door. Sender: a Mr I Mosley of Hertfordshire. Inside: *Essence* and *The Hard Shoulder*, the two discs that make up *Happiness Is The Road*. Track seven of disc one is called *Woke Up*, and it sounds horribly familiar. But hang on… It actually sounds quite good, too. There's a waft of tambourine bells jingling merrily deep in the mix. It's not particularly audible unless you strain yourself to listen, but there nonetheless – and even more remarkably, in time with all the other instruments.

"We were thinking of getting you a gold tambourine made," says Kelly. 'But then we heard what you did."

We have reassembled at the Racket Club to talk more fully about the record, which, despite the tambourine, has vindicated their decision to work so long and hard. The results are beautiful and mysterious, and with *Essence* in particular they seem to have distilled whatever is unique about them. It's probably the best record they've made, ahead even of *Afraid Of Sunlight* and their last two, *Marbles* and *Somewhere Else*.

Ranged against them is an invincible tyranny of reputation. They are forever the band who made *Kayleigh*. Mention of their name to the general public usually elicits a response of: "Oh, are they still going?" Just recently they were a part of an '80s Band' giveaway in the *Daily Mail*. And yet here is this music, coming year after year in a wonderful flow that even they don't fully understand.

They know already that their rewards for the new album will be low-key, but no less meaningful for it. They inspire fervent devotion in their fan-base.

"What we know is that our music connects with people," says Hogarth. "I had someone telling me that we'd given him a path to live by; people saying that the music has helped them through a bereavement or a love affair and all of these things. I suppose it's the upside of what I get for being the guy that's not Fish – all that baggage that I carry around."

Hogarth falls silent for a minute, considering his lot. Marillion are a band out of time, not the thing from the 80s that people think they are but instead a cult band of a new and different kind, made greater by their circumstances but constrained by them too.

"When we go off and play with other musicians, which we do sometimes, you find yourself thinking: 'Oh, this is strange,' says Rothery. "Then we start to play together again, and we just know what each other is going to do. It sounds corny, but something magical happens."

With the record finished, ahead for Marillion lie rehearsals for a big tour and, next year, two of their fan convention weekends, one in Canada and one in Holland. Both of them are already almost sold out.

"We need to start thinking about a set," mumbles Mark Kelly. "There's only about 120 songs for us to choose from."

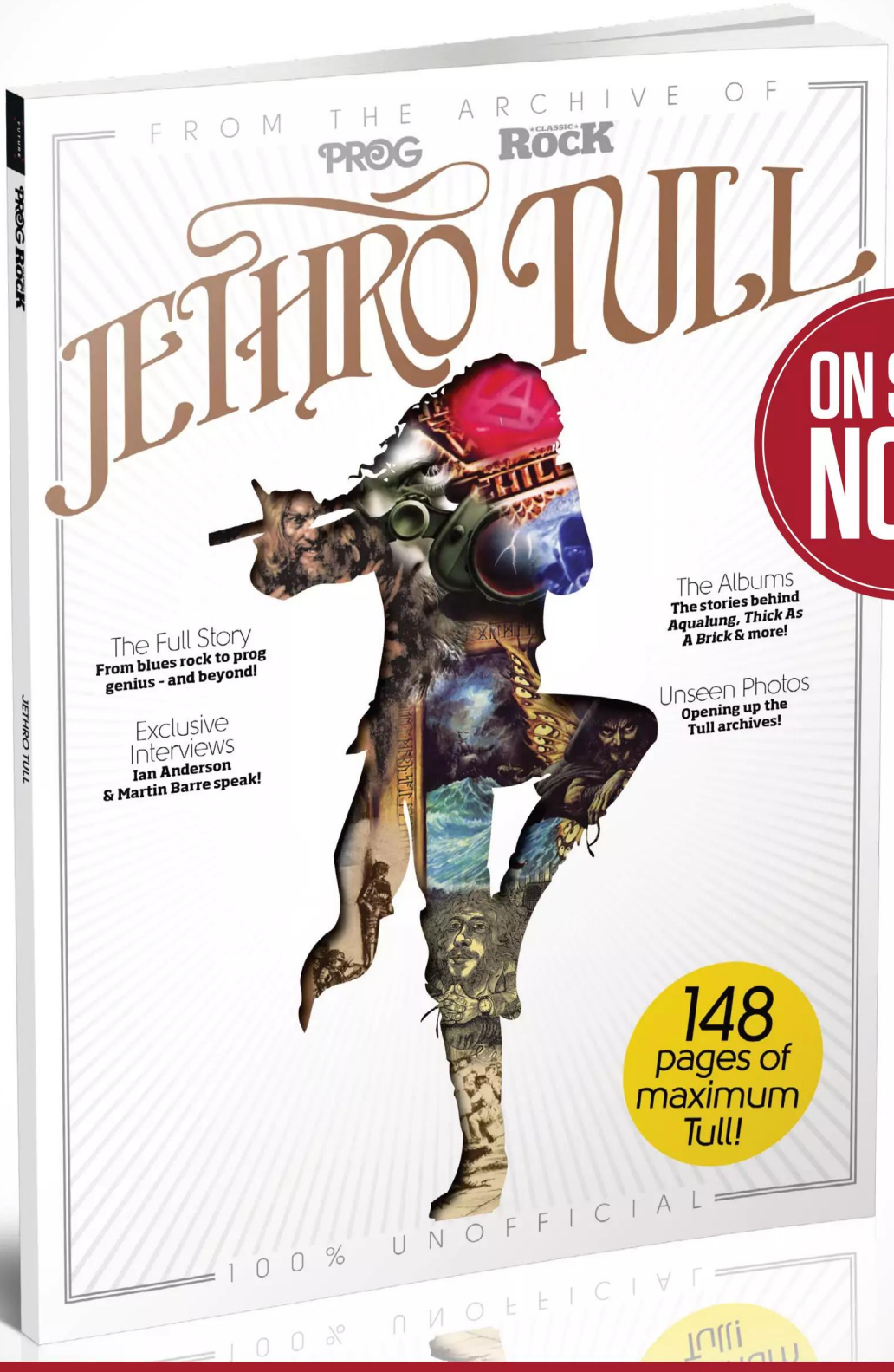
"Actually, do us a favour," Steve Hogarth says to me. "Email me a list of the 20 songs you'd put on the set-list."

"Well," I tell him, "I can think of one straight away…"

"Don't shoot me I'm only the tambourine player!" Hotten gets offed for missing a beat.

DISCOVER THE STORY OF PROG'S ENIGMATIC GENIUSES

From the band's early blues roots, through their progressive rock heyday, their folk trilogy of albums and into the modern era, discover classic interviews, unseen photos from the Tull archive, and exclusive new interviews.



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Q&A Ian Mosley

From drumming in infamous 60s hippie musical *Hair* to auditioning for AC/DC, Ian Mosley's journey took him down some unlikely avenues before he ended up in the Marillion drumseat. But he's turned out to be more than just the band's backbone and peacemaker – he's the undisputed tennis king too...

Words: Dave Everley **Portraits:** Kevin Nixon

When Ian Mosley was a teenager with dreams of becoming a professional drummer, he got the chance to meet Buddy Rich. The legendarily irascible sticksman was appearing at the BBC Television Theatre in Shepherd's Bush. Mosley's mother worked for the Beeb, and managed to wangle her son into rehearsals.

"After they'd finished rehearsing, I went backstage and knocked on his dressing room door," says Mosley today. "This voice went [curtly], 'Yep?' I thought, 'I'm really in trouble now', 'cos he had a reputation of being quite a mean guy. But I said, 'Mr Rich, my name's Ian, I just wanted to say hello and ask you some questions.' And he said, 'Come in.' So I sat there and asked him about drumming while he was having a shave. And he was really, really nice. If he'd have said, 'I think you should give up, I probably would have.'"

Luckily that wasn't the case, and Rich's papal blessing stuck with the young Mosley. His subsequent journey took him through such disparate gigs as drummer for infamous late 60s musical *Hair* to touring drummer for Steve Hackett, before he eventually landed on Planet Marillion in 1984.

"When I joined, I was the oldest member of the band, and supposedly one of the wisest," he says. "None of that was true. Back in the 80s, problems seemed to arise when there wasn't a problem. And because of the way I was, I was like, 'Boys, there really isn't a problem here.' I think that's carried on really. But generally we're all a lot more laid back these days. If any of us have got a problem, we can chat about it. I mean, I'm working with my mates, and it's the best job in the world."

What was your first proper show as a drummer?

It was probably a wedding gig at a working men's club somewhere. The bridesmaid threw up over my drumkit. I can't remember what I got, but I was only getting paid £10.50 a week at the time.

How did you go from vomiting bridesmaids to being in the pit of the musical *Hair*?

I was working at a drum shop in London called Drum City, on Shaftesbury Avenue. One day, a guy named Peter Wolf, who was the drummer of the show *Hair* at the Shaftesbury Theatre, came in. He said, "Ian, do you fancy doing the show?" And I said, "You're taking the piss aren't you? I can't do that." And he said, "You'll be able to do it, it'll be a doddle."

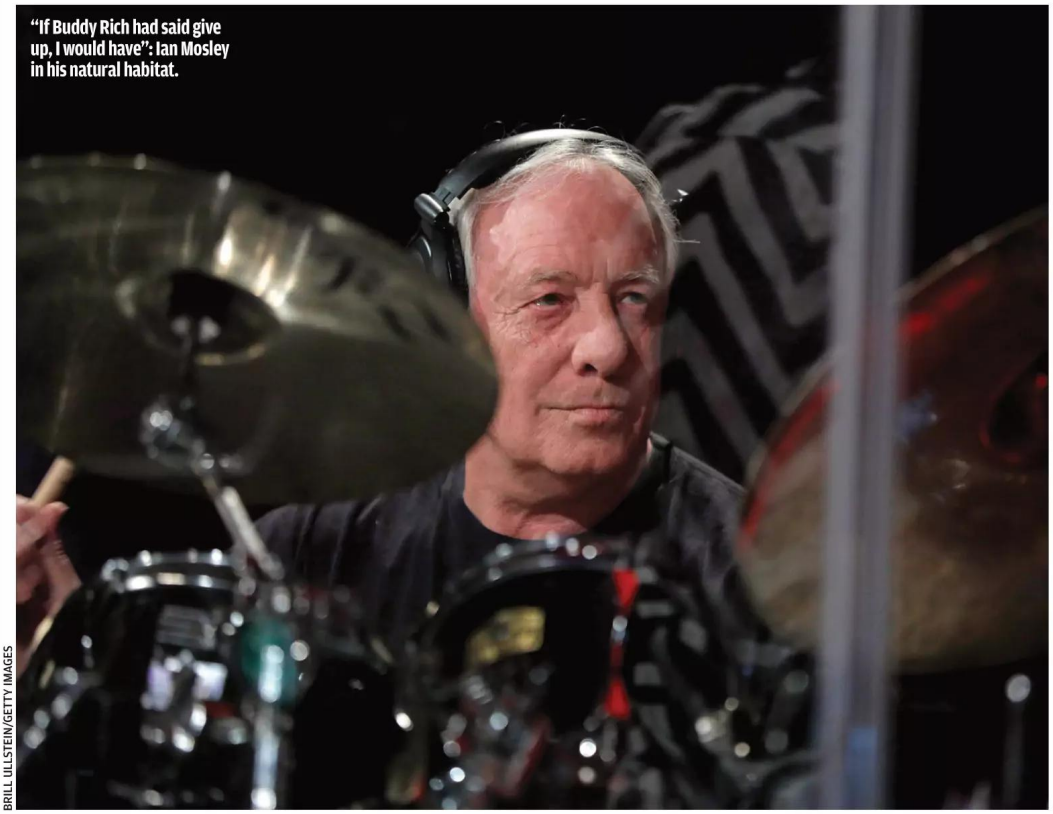
So I went along to see what it was all about. I was sitting next to the drummer, watching him play and trying to pick it up, and all of a sudden there were 12 naked girls onstage. After the show Pete said to me, "Do you want to do it?" And I said, "Yeah!"

It must be quite distracting trying to play the drums when you've got all sorts of things wobbling in front of you, male and female...

Yeah, though I must admit I wasn't really that into the male bits. But I did it for about six or seven weeks. It was terrifying the first couple of nights. Actually, [future Sensational Alex Harvey Band leader] Alex Harvey was on guitar. You wouldn't have recognised him – he wore a tweed jacket with leather elbow patches. He was really nice and helped me a lot, 'cos I was a kid.

You were in the thick of swinging London. Was it as swinging as legend has it?

Well, I kind of missed that swinging 60s thing by a couple of years, but it was still pretty good. I used to go to various clubs in the West End. When I worked at Drum City, I was on first name terms with the girls from the



"If Buddy Rich had said give up, I would have": Ian Mosley in his natural habitat.

BRILL ULLSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES

> I was sitting next to the drummer in *Hair*, trying to pick it up, and all of a sudden there were 12 naked girls onstage.

strip clubs. It was good fun.

But with *Hair*, after about three weeks I thought, "This is a doddle." After about five weeks, I thought, "I really don't want to do this for much longer." After six weeks, I'd finished and the fixers rang me and asked if I fancied going out on tour with the show. And I said, "No, I really don't."

Your first proper band was Darryl Way's Wolf. What was that like?
It was good fun. He'd just left Curved Air, and he was a pop star really. That band had a great guitarist, a guy named John Etheridge, who had played with Soft Machine. The bassist was a guy named Dek Messecar. When we were reviewed, no one ever said, "What a great bass player." They just said, "Good looking bass player."

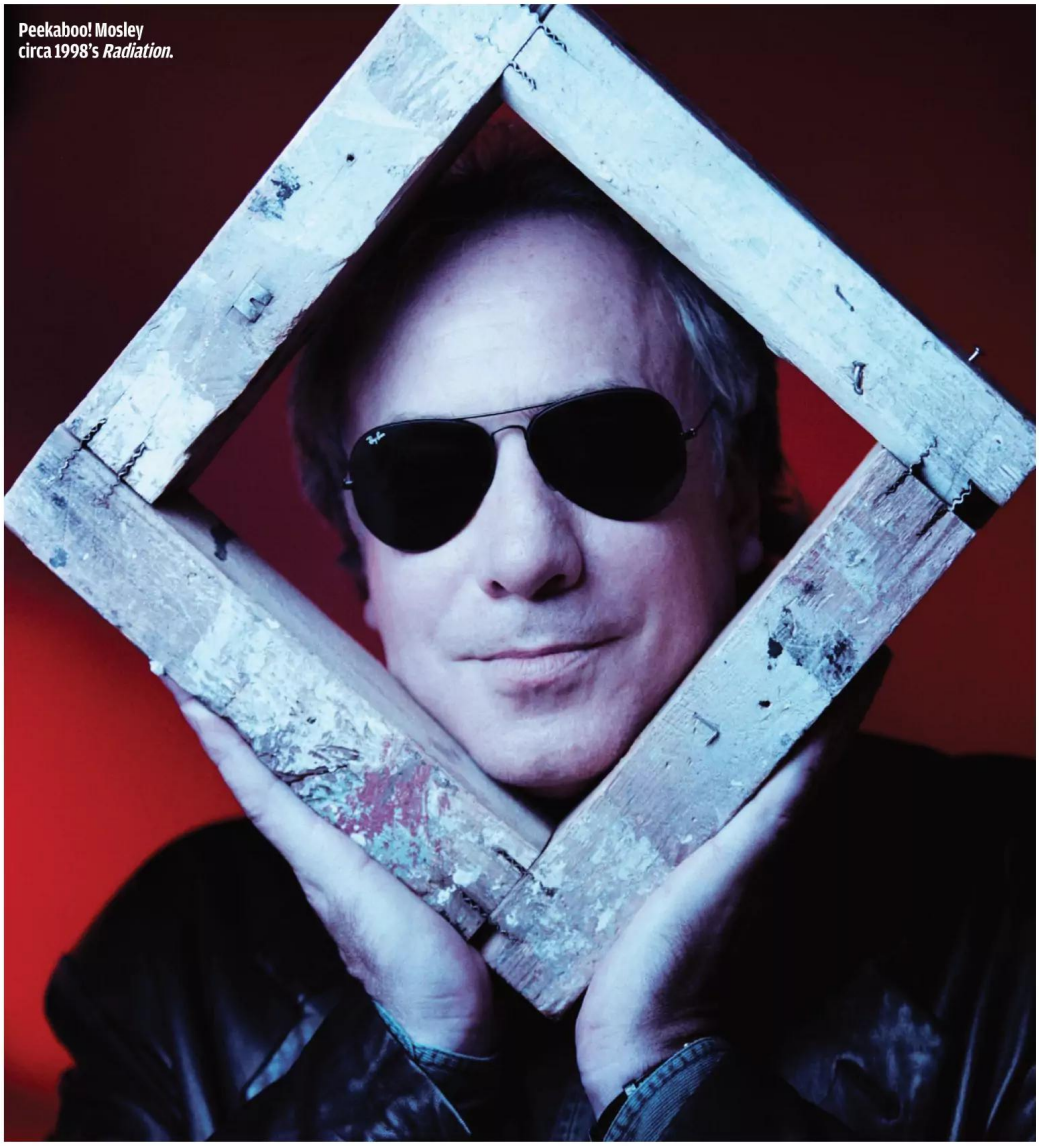
What did they say about you?
I was quite fortunate. [*Melody Maker* journalist] Chris Welch called me "a whizz-kid drummer." I thought, "That's nice, I'll take that."

Did you audition for any big name bands before you joined Marillion?
At the time, the only way you could join a band was if someone died. I did audition for Buggles. Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes asked me if I was interested in doing a tour with them. They'd just had a hit with *Video Killed The Radio Star* and I thought, "Yeah, sounds good." But nothing happened because Trevor left to join Yes before the tour, and then Geoff followed him.

AC/DC was another one. I had an audition with them. After about 10 minutes I stopped and I said, "Look guys, I can pretend to play like this but I can't really." They were really nice, and we had a great play, but I could only pretend to be a heavy rock drummer for a few minutes.

You joined Marillion in 1984. Had you heard of them before you joined?
I'd been touring with Steve Hackett for two or three years, and after Steve's gigs we used to do signings. And people kept saying to me, "What do you think of Marillion?" I'd never heard of them, but because I was quite a hardened session guy and you knew what was around the corner, I'd always say, "Yeah, they're fantastic." They sounded very intriguing.

A few weeks later I was at home, and I opened one of the weekly music papers and it said, "Marillion need drummer." And I thought, "Hmmm, this is very odd. This name keeps coming up. I wonder if I know anyone in their camp?" It turned out a friend who worked for Steve Hackett knew [then Marillion manager] John Arnison. So he wrote John a letter, saying I was a good bloke. I've still got it somewhere.



Peekaboo! Mosley circa 1998's *Radiation*.

> "I'd never heard of Marillion, but because you never know what's around the corner, I'd always say, 'Yeah, they're fantastic.'"

Did you actually audition for the band?
What happened was that John Arnison phoned me and said could I come along and have a play? But I told them I couldn't because I was doing a Belgian drum clinic. When it finished, I rang them back and they said, "No, we've found somebody."

Anoraknophilia: Marillion model their range of rainproof coats.

PRESS X2

And they'd got a guy named Jonathan Mover, an American drummer. So I thought that was the end of it. Then a few weeks later I got a call from John again saying that the boys were up at Rockfield studio in Wales doing their second album and would I go along and help them out as a studio musician.

When you walked into the room at Rockfield and you saw this motley assortment of blokes, what did you think?

Well, I actually gave Pete and Steve a lift up to Wales. I lived near Aylesbury, so I went to their houses to pick them up. I remember knocking on the door and Pete answered and he looked about 11. Same with Steve. "Blimey, they look really young."

They'd hired and fired three different drummers just before you joined. Did you see it as a long-term thing?

I knew they'd had a bit of a Spinal Tap thing going. I got to Rockfield and the first thing we did was sit down and have dinner, which was the first time I met Fish and Mark. I said to Fish, "What happened to the last drummer?" And all he said to me was, "Well, he was American." And I said, "You'll get on with my wife then, she's American." There was a glint in his eye and I was being tongue-in-cheek about it, so we all hit it off straight away.

When did you go from helping them out in the studio to becoming a full-time member of Marillion?

Even from the first few gigs I did with them, there was some magic, some chemistry. I thought, "This is what it's about." On the first tour I did with them, John Arnison came up to me at the back of the bus and said, "Ian, the boys want you to join permanently." I was earning pretty good money doing sessions and stuff, and they were all on about 50 quid a week, so I said, "That's great, but I can't really afford to do it." So he went down to the front of the bus and gave everyone an immediate pay rise. I was Mr Popular on that tour.

What do you remember about recording *Fugazi*?

My initial thoughts was that the material they were working on felt totally natural, it was right up my street. There was an energy. They had quite a lot of the skeleton of the stuff written. From the word go, I thought, "I'm really enjoying this." And they were a good bunch of fellas as well.

Is it true that you were best man at Fish's first wedding?

Yeah, but to be honest it was a bit of a mystery to me why Fish asked me to be his best man, because I didn't know that much about him. I mean, we got on well, but I didn't grow up with him, I never went to school with him. Yet there was a guy named Tony who was one of his best friends, who was working for us on the crew, who really had known him all his life. And I was asking Tony the night before the wedding, "Come on Tony, give me some information 'cos I've got to do a speech." So it was a little bit odd. But we were friends.

When Fish told you he was leaving, did you panic or were you relieved?

Well, it had got really difficult. The four of us were carrying on, trying to write, and Fish just didn't want to be there in rehearsals or writing situations. When it happened, he sent us all a letter, and I don't think anyone panicked. We just thought, "Well, he'd better fuck off then."

I was very aware of the consequences, of course, I remember listening to something on Radio 1 and they had woman that sang *China In Your Hand* [T'Pau's Carol Decker] on. The DJ played one of our songs and said, "Well, Fish has left Marillion", and she said, "Well, that's the end of the band then, isn't it, forget it." And I thought, "You bitch." So things like were a little bit disturbing. But at no point did the four of us think, "Well, that's it."

Is it true that you discovered Steve Hogarth?

Well, I wouldn't say that because he'd had a couple of great bands of his own. But at the time we were getting cassettes from various people who wanted to try out. I used to drive from my house to Aylesbury every day with a handful of cassettes on the passenger seat, and I'd put them in the cassette player and listen to them. And one day I put this cassette in, and it was Steve Hogarth singing this track called *Games In Germany*. And right away I thought, "Wow, this guy's voice sounds great." I got to Pete's house and everybody was unanimous: "Yes, get him along."

So we called and got him along.

> When I joined, I was the oldest member of the band, and supposedly one of the wisest. None of that was true.

He said, "What do you want me to do?" We went, "Here's some lyrics, just try these over this piece of music if you can." And that was [*Seasons End* opener] *The King Of Sunset Town*.

Straight away, we thought he was brilliant, so we asked him if he'd like to join... and he said he didn't know, he'd have to think about it. I thought, "Bollocks."

But I knew Darryl Way from Darryl Way's Wolf lived really close to Steve, and they were drinking buddies. So I rang Darryl up and said, "Look Darryl, we really want Steve to give it a go, can you have a word with him? I'll send his wife flowers, whatever you want." So I think Darryl did have a chat with him, and Steve came along and said, "Okay, I'll give it a go."

What do you remember about making *Seasons End*?

We had such a good time writing and recording it. We already had a lot of material written before Steve joined, and he would arrived at rehearsals with a bucket full of cassettes with his own ideas. We used to say, "Have you got anything in the bucket worth doing?" The first thing he ever pulled out was *Easter*. So that was a good start.

Things got tough for Marillion after *Afraid Of Sunlight*. What did that feel like?

I felt a little bit lost in a way. *Afraid Of Sunlight* sold something like 300,000 albums – it was still a lot of albums, even then. And then we got dropped. I just thought, "What?"

You recorded three albums in the late 90s – *This Strange Engine*, *Radiation* and *Marillion.com*. How do you look back on them now?

This Strange Engine is one of my favourite albums. *Radiation*, I couldn't listen to at the time, because I hated the production. But when Mike Hunter remixed it [in 2013], I thought, "Bloody hell, there's some really good stuff on here." The problem was that the label we were on wasn't really giving us any proper promotion. They knew we had a fanbase who would find our albums even if they were under a rock somewhere. They just thought, "A Marillion album, it's a licence to print money." Except it wasn't for us.

When things were tough, did it ever feel like it was the end of the road for Marillion?
I don't think any of the band ever felt that, but the manager definitely felt that. He said to me one day, "You should think of doing Marillion six months of the year and doing something for the rest of the year."

What would you have done? Would you have gone back to drumming in the West End?
I suppose so. But as a freelance session guy, you get used to getting to the studio, doing an album in a day and then clearing off. And then you join a real band and it's, "Shall we go in the studio?" "Well, I can't be arsed today." It was a lot more laid-back. To switch to going back to being in the right place at the right time, and phoning everybody to let them know I'm still about, I don't know if I could have coped.

Did you breathe a sigh of relief that the crowdfunding experiment worked?
We definitely relaxed a little bit. We knew that the fans were really up for it. It's unbelievable. For all they knew, we could have gone out and bought Ferraris and knocked it on the head. But of course, we always want to do something better. It got to the point where we decided not to do a crowdfunding thing with one album, and we actually got people emailing and saying, 'No, we really want you to.' They were quite pissed off that we weren't doing it.

The last 15 years have seen a massive upswing in the band's fortunes. What's the mood like in Marillion compared to the of the 90s, or even the mid-80s?
What I've noticed over the last few years is that we're much more relaxed about stuff. In the first few years of Steve H joining us, he and Mark used to have real set-tos, to the point where I thought, "This is really bad news." 'Cos it was a shock for Steve Hogarth joining a band, which I could relate to. He was used to going into studios, working in a very methodical way, then coming out at the end of the day with product. And he joined Marillion and it was very laid-back: "Shall we write a song?" "No, let's just see how it goes." Things could get pretty tense.

What was the worst argument they had?
I don't know about the worst, but there was one gig in Germany. We'd had a great show and we were going on to do an encore, and Steve Hogarth said, "Let's do *Rudolph The Red Nose Reindeer*", 'cos it was a Christmas show. And Mark said, "I'm not fucking playing that." We nearly split up over it.

What do you do away from music?
I did get well into playing tennis for a few years. The passion for that started at Hook End when we were doing *Seasons End*. We were there for months, it was the most beautiful summer and they had tennis courts, and that's when I started playing. And that carried on right up until about three or four years ago. I had to have my gallbladder taken out, and ever since then I haven't really played tennis.

From *Hair* to hoodie: the fascinating journey of Ian Mosley.

LEFT: KEVIN NIXON

Were you the best tennis player in Marillion?
Oh definitely. The others were just crap.

Did you stay in touch with Fish after he left?
We didn't speak for a long time. But the last few years we've become friendly again. We chat on the phone occasionally, we wish each other happy new year every new year. I wish him really well. I don't dwell on all the crap stuff. We had some really good times together, and that's what I tend to dwell on.

What's your personal favourite Marillion album?
It's probably a toss-up. I love *Brave*, and I love *FEAR*.

What is about *Brave* that you love?
We did *Seasons End*, which was a doddle, but *Holidays In Eden* was really hard work – we were starting from scratch, it was a blank canvas, we were a bit lost. But when *Brave* happened, it suddenly felt like a band again. It felt like we were all going down the same avenue together. It's a third album thing – it happened with *Misplaced Childhood* in the 80s, and it happened with our third album with Steve Hogarth in the 1990s.

What about *FEAR*?
With *FEAR*, it's an album that works from beginning to end. I really enjoy every track on it. And it was another point where Mike Hunter, our producer, really just nailed it. Of course it helped that we got some pretty good reviews, it was really well received. It was wonderful. The last two or three years have been fantastic for us. Touring has just been getting better and better, and the whole thing has been really enjoyable.

What can we expect from the next Marillion album?
It's really early days. We're at the point where we're jamming every day in the studio. It would be really nice if we could write an album pretty quickly.

Has that ever happened?
It happened with *Afraid Of Sunlight*. [Laughs] But since then, no, never. You've more chance of getting hit by Skylab falling out of the sky.

PRESS

The Show Must Go On!

THANKS TO: PROUD CABARET CITY, VICKY BUTTERFLY, WANDERLUST, LEANNA LONGO, ALI ROSE REES, CLAIRE PURSGLOVE, NATASHA SCHARF AND MICHELLE COURT

Finding success outside the established music biz has always been **Marillion**'s Holy Grail. With no one to please but their legions of fans the prog titans, in 2012 the band presented the world with *Sounds That Can't Be Made* – their boldest album yet…

Words: Dom Lawson
Photos: Rob Monk/Future

We really shouldn't blame mainstream commentators for their laughably warped view of the history of progressive rock. The persistent myth that the genre died on its sorry backside at the end of the 70s and has only just recovered to claw back some vacuous retrospective cool bears little resemblance to the reality, of course, but for those of us who live and breathe the idea of rock music with no limits, being a prog fan was never about fitting in or seeing our favourite bands receiving recognition from some haughty media elite. We and our music have been here for more than four decades and we're not going anywhere, are we?

> "We're a band that doesn't have any rules. We get a thrill out of redefining what we are and what we might represent."
> **Steve Hogarth**

Perhaps the cruellest aspect of the mainstream's ongoing ignorance when it comes to prog is that the one band that can rightfully claim to have bridged the gap between prog's ignominious near-denouement and its 21st century rebirth as the one area of popular music that consistently dares to be different are seldom acknowledged as significant to music as a whole. Poor old Marillion, you might say: saviours of prog in the 80s and its most reliable and prolific exponents ever since, they will forever be remembered by the uninitiated as the band that stormed the pop charts with *Kayleigh*, rather than the fearless, forward-thinking innovators and craftsmen that we know and love.

Peek-a-boo! Marillion: (l-r) Mark Kelly, Steve Rothery, Steve Hogarth, Ian Mosley, Pete Trewavas.

But then again, Marillion really don't need or deserve anyone's pity. As they prepare to unveil their 17th studio album, the extraordinary *Sounds That Can't Be Made*, the most enduring progressive rock band are in the rudest of health, with a huge and adoring global fan base cheering their every move, and an admirable disregard for toeing the conventional line.

"This situation we're in, it's the Holy Grail, to be honest," says Steve Hogarth, veteran "new boy" and Marillion's frontman since 1989. "If you're any kind of creative artist, the Holy Grail is to just do what you wanna do and say what you wanna say with no compromise to business or marketing, and no obvious self-consciousness about the market place, who will or won't buy your records or how you're perceived. We don't *have* to have an image. We don't *have* to have a hit or a song for radio. We're free of all of those monstrous compromises that most artists have to make in order to continue to exist, so we're incredibly lucky."

Freedom has treated Marillion incredibly well over the last decade or so. Despite their many and impressive commercial triumphs during the early years of the band, it was the moment in 1997 when the band's US fans had a whip-round and raised $60,000 to enable their heroes to cross the Atlantic for a tour that their then label were unwilling to finance that led to Hogarth, guitarist Steve Rothery, bassist Pete Trewavas, keyboardist Mark Kelly and drummer Ian Mosley becoming one of the first major rock bands to embrace the endless possibilities of the online world. At that precious moment, Marillion began the process of throwing off the shackles of the mainstream music industry and started to mutate into a wholly self-sufficient and remorselessly individual creative collective that no longer needed financial support or encouraging pats on the back from anyone other than their devoted fans. Having established marillion.com long before most other successful bands started taking the internet seriously, Marillion entered the 21st century several steps ahead of everyone else and, to the delight of their admirers and to the bemusement of their detractors, are now more popular than they have ever been.

"Everything started to change with the embrace of the internet and the website and the fact that we realised, or maybe it was brought to our attention, that our fans weren't like other fans and they were prepared to take hold of us and support us in a totally different way," Hogarth recalls. "We realised that we should find out who our fans are. We got into a one-on-one relationship with the fans. Instead of an 'us-and-them' relationship, it's just *us* now. It's quite a strange thing; what's really come out of this piece of digital technology is spirit. We probably started to get a feeling that the internet had that potential to create something really spiritual way back in '97, before most people in the UK had been anywhere near the internet with a long stick. In fact, people were sneering and pointing at us and calling us nerds."

With hindsight, it was always going to be the case that the geeks would inherit the Earth, and with Bill Gates and Steve Jobs as credible role models, the way the internet has changed everyone's lives, and the whole world along with it, has done genuine underground and non-mainstream art and music a huge favour along the way. As a result, while fans of bands like Marillion may still be regarded as incurable nerds by a disinterested media, the plain truth is that progressive rock has more than earned the right to be regarded as a source of innovation, as Steve Hogarth mischievously confirms.

"Anyone who does anything in a garden shed is branded a nerd," he twinkles. "And yet garden sheds are where the Alan Turings and the Isaac Newtons start off, doing their thing. They're the obsessives, the people who are *onto* something. There's no point in sharing that stuff with most people because they wouldn't understand, so the future tends to come out of sheds!"

Shed-dwellers par excellence, Marillion are about to emerge, blinking, into the sunlight once again as *Sounds That Can't Be Made* is finally released this September. Four years on from the band's last album of original studio material, the mammoth two-disc *Happiness Is The Road*, this latest full-length has certainly taken a long time to piece together. But even within those years Marillion were far from off the radar. As bassist Pete Trewavas explains, 2010's album of acoustic reworkings, *Less Is More*, provided a necessary stopgap to keep the fans happy and to give its creators breathing space while still allowing them to keep the creative juices flowing.

"We did *Less Is More* as a buffer, because we felt we'd been on this treadmill of writing, recording and then going out touring for album after album and we'd done that for the last 10 years," says the bassist. "*Marbles* was a double album, then we did *Somewhere Else* and then *Happiness Is The Road*, which again was a double

> "Anyone who does anything in a garden shed is branded a nerd, but the future tends to come out of sheds!"
> **Steve Hogarth**

What Marillion Mean To Me

RACHEL COHEN
EX-THE REASONING

"What I love about Marillion is that their music moves me physically, I really do get shivers down the spine when I listen to them. There's so much melody about the songs, and H's voice is spectacular. I also love a lot of his lyrics. I know that's a little contentious, but it's the way I feel.

"I first got into them with the *Seasons End* album. I was aware of the Fish era, but it was only when I heard that album that they really got to me. Then I went backwards and checked out what they'd done before. I saw them live on that tour, and have seen them at least once on every tour since then. Obviously, it's been a case of fitting in going to their gigs with what we are doing in The Reasoning.

"If I had to choose one album that I'd regard as my favourite, then that would be *Marbles*. It's right up there as one of my all-time faves by anyone. Songwise, I'd choose *Fantastic Place* from *Marbles* as one that always sticks out for me. I'd regard it as one of the best songs ever written. This really gets through to me." **MD**

FUTURE

Season's change: Hogarth joins the band in 1989.

PRESS

album, so we produced this huge body of work over a relatively short space of time and we just felt completely drained. After *Less Is More* we thought we'd get back on the old writing treadmill, but we were jamming around and it was obvious that we weren't really ready to start. If truth be known, we should've had some proper time away from each other, but we didn't. At one point it was all getting tense and very heated, so we thought, just so we didn't split up, we should have time away from each other! That's why this album has taken such a long time to do. We tried to make it a bit more fun by going away to other places."

And so that's what they did. Firstly, Marillion flew to Portugal to have a stab at writing some new material. Although opinion within the band seems to be divided between those who felt the trip was worthwhile and those who regard it as "a total disaster", it's obvious that the higher creative gears required to facilitate the writing of another strong album were conspicuous by their absence. A second trip – to Italy – was aborted, with relations between members of the band understandably strained by this point. In the end, it would be Peter Gabriel's Real World studios in the West Country that would provide Marillion with the perfect environment for rediscovering the artistic harmony that has driven them purposefully along for the last two decades.

"Real World is a fantastic studio," states Trewavas. "It's like the NASA of recording studios. It's got *everything*. The amount of money that Peter Gabriel has spent on the place is alarming! Whatever you want to do and whatever you might want to try, it's all there in a cupboard somewhere. It's very uplifting and rewarding, both musically and spiritually. It was so nice to get away from everything. We did whatever we could to make it an enjoyable and creative adventure for us. Essentially, we always start the process by jamming and coming up with ideas together. Whatever sparks the imagination and excites everybody, those are the kind of moments we're trying to capture and put together, if and when they'll fit. And then we try to make something cohesive."

> "The downside of taking so long over one album is that when you spend three years on a project you get to the point where you start wondering 'Is this any good?'" **Mark Kelly**

"The downside of taking so long over one album is that when you spend three years on a project you get to the point where you start wondering 'Is this any good?' and you get sick of some of it," posits keyboardist Mark Kelly. "There are certain songs that you think are really good and other bits that you think 'Oh god!' but that's because it took so long. You don't really know anymore. But we do have the luxury of being able to do that. In the past we did go through a phase of making an album a year to keep the bank manager happy, but we're not in that position anymore, which is fortunate, because it means and we can ask, 'Is that as good as it can be?' and then start again if necessary."

Few bands survive for over 30 years and even fewer survive with a stable line-up in the way that Marillion have done since recruiting Steve Hogarth and confounding cynics by refusing to lie down and die amid the post-Fish fallout of 1989. The vast catalogue of almost uniformly glorious music that the band have produced since that momentary career stutter must surely stand as testament to their interpersonal and creative chemistry. The fact that the vast majority of Marillion music is instigated, created and arranged by all five men collaborating together, jamming in a room together and waiting for moments of magic to happen, makes the band's creative process and ability to keep finding fresh modes of expression seem even more remarkable. Yet again, a refreshing alternative to the cynical, written-to-order bilge that dominates the pop charts, a Marillion album seems to evolve entirely organically, propelled along by the optimism and strong will of its ever-enthusiastic creators.

"We don't really talk about stuff as much as you would expect," states Trewavas. "Through the process – and in this instance it's been quite a long process – everyone gets a feel for what's working and what isn't working. We all tend to have a sense of what works and what doesn't, rather than saying 'Don't sing that, it's bloody awful!' or 'For god's sake don't play that riff, I hate it!' We very rarely get into those situations. Things have a way of working themselves out. We try and present things that everybody is excited about."

Time was on their side: Marillion know what makes the fans tick too.

As the sole remaining member of Marillion's original 1979 line-up, Steve Rothery has enjoyed and endured every moment of the band's journey. As he speaks to *Prog*, he is willingly embroiled in putting the finishing touches to his guitar parts on *Sounds That Can't Be Made*; his enthusiasm for pushing his band forward and his faith in their music's vitality as potent and unwavering as ever.

"Most bands burn out after a few albums, so to come up with something as strong as this after 17 albums says a lot for the chemistry between us, never mind the talent of the individual," Rothery states with obvious pride. "We create things together; something quite magical happens when we're in a room and that process starts. It takes a while to get it started. It's like having a really old vintage car and cranking the handle in the morning and trying to get it started, and there's a lot of noise and smoke! And that's what we're like for the first year, but then it all kicks off. The difficulty is stopping, because you build up this momentum and put yourself in this place mentally where you can create, but then you have to

What Marillion Mean To Me

MARK KILMINSTER
TIN SPIRITS

"For me, it's all about emotion with Marillion. I'd never really listened to them before reading a rave review of *Brave*, the movie, and it intrigued me enough to go out and get that and the album. I put it on, and it just blew me away. In fact, it changed my whole musical outlook, and got me into prog.

"Hogarth's lyrics and vocals are out on their own; nobody can touch what he does. And Pete Trewavas has such a melodic bass style. Without realising it, I probably plagiarise him. And you listen to Steve Rothery's guitar solos... Well, they're like songs in their own right. No other guitarist is doing that as far as I'm concerned.

"I saw them for the first time on the *This Strange Engine* tour, at Shepherd's Bush Empire, and I shed a tear. They just hit you in a certain way. I'm not sure what it is about them that gets to me, but the combination of tone and notes gets to the sweet spot every time. I've spoken to other Marillion fans and they feel the same way. What they do is so emotional; it can't fail to move you. I guess I'm just a fan boy!" **MD**

FUTURE

FUTURE NETWORK

stop creating and become more of an arranger – be more focused, which is a whole different mindset. So it's always a shame that you can't write one album, carry on and write another one and then finish the first album. Hopefully we've created something very special this time. I'm really very confident that *Sounds That Can't Be Made* is a really good album."

At the time of writing, *Sounds That Can't Be Made* is still being tinkered with and given a final polish, with deadlines looming but little sense that anything other than perfection will satisfy Rothery and his bandmates. Nevertheless, *Prog* is privileged to be given a sneak preview of the new songs and, even in their far-from-final incarnations, they make up one of the most startling and joyously rounded records of Marillion's career to date. In fact, it only takes one listen to *Gaza*, the album's 17-minute opening epic, to realise there is something different about this album. With an edginess and intensity that few will be expecting from these respected veterans, the song is an extraordinary sonic adventure that ebbs, flows and undergoes multiple transformations throughout its lengthy duration. Even more significantly, as its title suggests, *Gaza* explores lyrical territory that may come as a shock to anyone who regards Marillion as fuzzy-headed prog dinosaurs. A bleak, emotionally raw and frequently moving portrayal of lives lived by Palestinians on the Israeli-occupied Gaza strip, the song stops short of being a declamatory political piece, but this is an angrier, edgier Marillion than we have witnessed before. Steve Hogarth, whose lyrics have become such an integral part of the band's musical potency over the years, is aware that dealing with such contentious subject matter has the potential to backfire and ruffle many feathers but, as he coolly explains, this was something he and his comrades felt they had to do.

"I became increasingly aware of the plight of the Palestinian people, especially those held prisoner in Gaza, a few years back," he says. "I'd seen a few TV documentaries and a few news items, but then I went to see Massive Attack. We were on the guest list and when you picked up your tickets they wanted a donation to the Hoping Foundation. So I went and checked

What Marillion Mean To Me

ANDY RIGLEY MR SO & SO

"It all starts with the songwriting, which is of the highest quality. Marillion just do not write songs that dip below a certain standard. And just how good these are is brought home when you get the chance to hear them played on acoustic guitars.

"There's also so much power in the way they play. This is obvious when you watch them live. Everything takes on a fresh dimension, and the vibe in the band right now is like a bunch of 18-year-olds who are just starting out in their first band. The enthusiasm is fantastic.

"Steve Hogarth doesn't get the credit he deserves from a lot of people for what he's done. In his own right, he's a stunning vocalist and a brilliant lyricist. When you listen to him on something like the *Marbles* album, you can appreciate the way he's made the role his own. There's a directness in what he writes and sings which suits Marillion, because it helps to bring out the emotion in what they do.

"For me, Marillion have succeeded in separating two different eras. There's the pre-Hogarth period, and the post-Hogarth one. Both are valid." **MD**

PRESS

SOUNDS THAT CAN'T BE MADE A modern classic in Marillion's own words....

GAZA
Steve Rothery: "In a way, it's the most important track we've ever written. It's musically adventurous and it's a real journey. But just from the humanitarian angle, Steve's lyrics put forward a viewpoint and should make people think about the situation. There's a very powerful message there, and the marriage of that message and our music creates something incredibly powerful. We're thinking about it as a set opener. It would be a great way to start a set."

POWER
SR: "It's a lyric that's been floating around for a while. The music we came up with this time really suits the word. The chorus is great. It's one of the more straightforward songs and a more typical Marillion song, in a way. But it's a lot of fun to play live. So far, the reception from the people who have heard it from the YouTube clip has been great. Everyone seems to love it."

MONTREAL
Steve Hogarth: "*Montreal* was an attempt to almost transcribe a diary into a song, which is something I've never done before. I used my diary entries from our trip to our convention the year before last. Montreal is a city that's always had a soft spot for Marillion and the vibration of the shows whenever we've gone there has been incredible. I thought it would be nice to let 'em know we know that and that it's precious to us. So we gave them a song."

POUR MY LOVE
SR: "This has an almost Prince-like quality to it. It's quite melodic but it's a different approach from what people might expect. It's interesting musically and it's something a little bit different. It's not that different from something like *Fantastic Place*, but the only thing you can say with 100 per cent certainty is that some people will love it and some people will hate it! As long as we get a reaction, I'll be happy."

LUCKY MAN
SR: "The riff was supposed to be like an *Abbey Road*-type thing. It does something that nods to that era and it has some other elements in there as well. What we always try to do is change direction within the song. *Lucky Man* turned out really well."

SH: "It's simply about what people want, the fact that one man's meat is another man's poison, I suppose. I've arrived at a point in my life where I feel that I've got everything I want and consider myself extremely lucky to be in that position. It's as simple as that."

INVISIBLE INK
SR: "It's the song I've had the least to do with! The piano part is Steve's and the guitar part is Pete's. It's melodic and a little bit quirky again, but pretty straight ahead. It's the one track I haven't really played on yet and I'm still trying to nail the third solo on *Sky Above The Rain*!"

SOUNDS THAT CAN'T BE MADE
SH: "It was an attempt to articulate the magic that goes on, whether it's a thought or a philosophy or a depth of feeling that is going on inside a person and is transmitted and received by another person or by a hundred thousand other people, an unspoken understanding."

SR: "It was the most interesting title of the lot so it ended up as the album title. When I came to record the guitar parts I used a lot of different approaches. With that title it's an invitation to go as weird as you can get! I got really weird on some of the takes. It's a bit left-field and quirky, but very interesting."

SKY ABOVE THE RAIN
SR: "This is probably my favourite track on the record. It's a brilliant and heartfelt lyric and, combined with the music, it's something very, very moving and intense. Most of the best ideas come from jamming and it's not the quickest way of writing, but you get stuff that you couldn't get in any other way. If you hear *Sky Above The Rain* or *Gaza*, they obviously couldn't have come from any other process."

out what it was and it's simply a foundation that raises money to provide materials and arts education – play, dance, painting and drawing – for children who live in refugee camps. That really got my head further into that situation and I started reading about the history of what happened in that part of the world from before the last war through to the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel in 1968, which was actually on my birthday, funnily enough, May 14th."

Although inspired by the Palestinian situation, Hogarth is not prone to glib sloganeering or superficial statements of empathy. Instead, the writing of *Gaza* seems to have sprung from a heartfelt desire to get to grips with the facts and reality of a humanitarian disaster that has lasted for decades with no apparent hope in sight.

> "It takes a while to get us started. It's like having a really old vintage car with a crank handle. There's a lot of noise and smoke!"
> **Steve Rothery**

"I wanted to go over there and was told that it's almost impossible to get into the Gaza Strip without a visa, which is almost impossible to get hold of anyway," the frontman states. "Getting out is a good deal harder than getting in. If I was to go, there'd be no guarantee I could get out when I wanted to get out, so I might end up having to cancel the rest of the year trying to get back out. So then I began Skyping quite a lot of people from different walks of life within the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, to try and get a sense and feeling of what life is like there. I didn't want to write a piece of naïve, romantic nonsense. I wanted to write something that was factually correct and an accurate reflection. That lyric was slowly being sharpened and put together during the process of making the record. It caused me a lot of sleepless nights because I didn't want to write a song just bashing Israel. You've got to keep coming back to writing the song from the perspective of a child growing up there."

With its unsettling shifts of mood and tempo, subtle Middle Eastern overtones and persistent core of dogged forward momentum, *Gaza* is possibly the most unique and affecting piece of music that Marillion have ever written. Similar in structure to past epics like *The Invisible Man*, but more extreme in both tone and delivery, it provides *Sounds That Can't Be Made* with a devastating foundation.

"We record pretty much everything we work on together," Pete Trewavas notes. "We record all the jams and sift through everything that we do, with Mike [Hunter, Marillion producer since 2007's *Somewhere Else*] as well. We put a lot of things in a folder with other like-minded bits of music, and we found we had a lot of Arabic sounding areas of music that we were getting into and it just worked with what Steve was writing."

"We've all mellowed a lot and the music has probably mellowed with us," adds Ian Mosley. "It's hard to be angry young men at our age, but saying that, Steve's got some pretty heavy duty lyrics on this album, especially on *Gaza*. Steve was very concerned about it when he first broached the subject, but the more we worked on it, and the more people he spoke to, it just grew and turned into this incredible thing. Sometimes you've got to speak up, really, haven't you?"

Once the gruelling clangour of *Gaza* subsides, the remaining songs on *Sounds That Can't Be Made* could hardly fail to come across as a breath of fresh air, but even Marillion's most myopically supportive acolytes may find themselves speechless at the range and depth of emotions and ecstatic melodic peaks that this album offers.

From the more straightforward thrills of *Power* (the first song to be unleashed onto the internet back in July) and *Invisible Ink*, through to the rambling, somnambulant sprawl of the 11-minute *Montreal* and the exquisite dynamics of the closing *Sky Above The Rain*, via the Beatles-saluting prog nirvana of *Lucky Man*, the shimmering art-funk of *Pour My Love* and the quirky textures of the title track, *Sounds That Can't Be*

There's no business like show business: the boys show they can still make each other laugh, even after 17 albums.

"If you're writing truth, it'll rattle people more than well-crafted fiction... If you can tell someone the truth in five words it'll hit them much harder than 105 words of fiction."

Steve Hogarth

Made is both a thoroughly cohesive and immersive work *and* a wildly diverse collection of songs that deftly showcase the breadth of vision that Marillion have at their disposal these days.

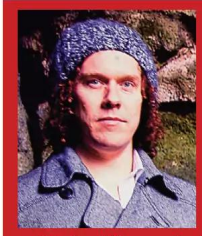
Above all, this is an album that dares to connect on a profound emotional level: the frequently startling intimacy of Steve Hogarth's lyrics and vocal delivery blend seamlessly with the intuitive brilliance of the rest of the band's performances – all notion of predetermined style melt away amid a sustained, celebratory rush of wonderful, life-affirming sound.

"I think if what you've written comes from a place where you were moved and if being moved is what led you to write in the first place, the chances are what you write will move other people," muses Hogarth. "I'm always worried that the purity of the emotion might get lost in a whole load of other musical agendas, so as long as the musicians are sensitive enough to what's being said and play to reinforce that emotion rather than to mask it, it works out well. As musicians, we're very good at knowing how to pluck a heart string, so if I'm saying something that's emotional, the music tends to amplify that.

"Our music really rattles people who get it to the core for whatever reason. Without trying to sound pompous, it's to do with truth as well. If you're writing truth, it'll rattle people more than well-crafted fiction, because people can sniff truth. If you can tell someone the truth in five words it'll hit them much harder than 105 words of fiction."

Maybe we're all getting a bit soppy in our old age, but there does seem to have been a considerable upsurge in bands that are unafraid to provoke tears from even their most burly and bearded of listeners. If you've revelled in the emotional clout of Anathema's *Weather Systems* this year, or had a private sniffle to *The Last*

What Marillion Mean To Me



PRESS

DANNY CAVANAGH
ANATHEMA

"You've got to admire the way that Marillion have always been determined to progress, grow and change. They have never been a band to stand still, and when you listen to what they've done it demands massive respect.

"But while musically they've always had a big impact, for me what they do goes beyond that. The way they reach out to the fans and have built such a rapport with them is something to admire. Their business model is brilliant and far-reaching. To get the fans involved in helping to fund albums is something I love. They've overcome all the problems associated with being on a label, and done it through the fans. It something others like Radiohead have emulated, and I'd like to see Anathema follow suit one day.

"Steve Rothery's playing has also been a huge influence on me. I used to sit and play his guitar parts all the time. The strange thing is that we've never done a gig with the band. Nor have we ever met them. That's something I'd like to put right, as they have proven you can do things your own way and make it work, if you're good enough and bold enough." **MD**

And then it was cups of Horlicks and early nights all round.

Escape from It Bites' *Map Of The Past*, you should probably approach the new Marillion album with a degree of caution because you may end up drenched in snot and unable to operate the kettle.

But some of us have been before. This writer vividly remembers listening to Marillion's mammoth *Marbles* album for the first time and being reduced to a blubbering heap by *The Invisible Man*, its surreal and shudder-inducingly confessional opening track. If there is a more affecting lyricist than Steve Hogarth operating in music today then will someone please ask them politely to go easy on we fragile souls...

"I feel privileged to know that you cried, because *Invisible Man* is a piece of truth," says Steve Hogarth. "I'm not clever enough to write something that potent by design. Its potency comes from its truth, and the fact that what I'm saying is about where I was at one point. And it's about being prepared to expose that as well. I think a lot of people would shy away from parting with that much truth to the world. It is a very raw thing to do. It's a little bit like getting your dick out in public and hoping no one laughs! It's that thing of exposing a very private part of yourself and also thinking 'Is this too much?' I thought that when I was writing *Invisible Man*. There are also some raw moments on the new album. Maybe it's too much for some people, but the people who get it, they really get it."

And yes, it's hard to argue that the people who get Marillion *really* get them. The uniquely direct and intimate relationship that the band have with their fans seems to grow in strength with each passing year, as the sold-out shows, fan-sating Marillion Weekend festivals and the many thousands of pre-ordered deluxe editions of the new album that are currently being manufactured would seem to confirm. In an age when music consumers are widely perceived to be suffering from a terminal decline in attention span and loyalty, Marillion continue to be a laudable exception to every rule, making music that challenges and confronts and yet delights an army of adherents. If nothing else, the rise and rise of Marillion proves that in spite of the rest of the world, progressive rock fans still believe that music matters and that there are few more exhilarating sensations than the discovery of something fresh and new to listen to.

"We're a band that doesn't have any rules," says Steve Hogarth. "So we don't have a rule that says we can't write a three-minute pop song and we haven't got a rule that says we're not allowed to write a 17-minute wandering piece of diary put to music like *Montreal* or some kind of manic confession. They're all within our remit and we're comfortable in any of those places. We try to keep redefining what you might consider us to be. *Pour My Love*, to my ear, is somewhere between Prince and Todd Rundgren, which is a great place to be and it's somewhere we haven't been before. We get a thrill out of redefining what we might represent. We used to be a bit scared, many years ago. We'd work on a song and see eyebrows go up across the room, like 'Ooh, maybe this isn't the kind of song we should be making...' but that stopped a long time ago and all bets are off now!'

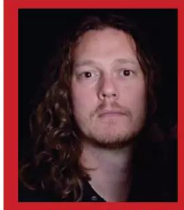
"Sometimes, when we're locked up in the studio for too long, you do forget, and then you go out and do a gig and it's 'Wait a minute, this is what it's all about!' and it's brilliant," says Ian Mosley. "Of course, it'd be nice to have mega media exposure, because I'd love to put on a show like Roger Waters or Pink Floyd. That kind of success would enable us to bring out a massive production. I'd love to blow up the drum kit at the end of the gig! Ha ha! But our fans are loyal and forgiving and we love them for that."

Impervious to time and the tides of fashion, Marillion have the music, the fans and the faith to keep nimbly side-stepping the hollow demands of a music industry that never really understood them. Thirty-three years after the story began, they are making some of the best music of their careers and show no signs of slowing down. If only one band could encapsulate the ethos and spirit of the last four decades of progressive rock, you would have to be a miserly soul to deny that Marillion are the most deserving. The journey continues. Hope never dies. Here's to more sounds that can't be made...

"We have the same hope for this album that we always have," says Steve Hogarth. "You create this stuff and put it out there. What's that story in the Bible where somebody sticks a baby in a basket made of reeds and floats it down river? Well, you create this thing that is incredibly precious to you and you float it down the river and hope it's loved as it goes by, and you hope someone takes it out and looks after it. I hope there are enough sensitive souls out there who get what I'm on about and that it hits them in the same part it did for me. And I hope nobody laughs when I pull my trousers down!"

> It's hard to be angry young men at our age, but saying that, Steve's got some pretty heavy duty lyrics on this album. Sometimes you've got to speak up, really, haven't you?"
> **Ian Mosley**

What Marillion Mean To Me



ADAM WAKEMAN
HEADSPACE

"Marillion always produce consistently strong and honest albums. I think that's because they are a band that's confident of who they are, and aren't trying to change into something they're not.

"It's so hard when a band change vocalist, and potentially it could have been a disaster for Marillion – if Steve Hogarth wasn't such a great and different singer. Melodically he's a really interesting vocalist and supported by some beautiful musical moments, as on *Angelina* from the *Marbles* album. That's one of my favourite Hogarth-era tracks.

"They get a lot of appreciation and respect from fans and musicians all over the world which, after all, is what counts. But mainstream radio always go in waves with their support. I doubt we'll get BBC Radio 1 playing a Marillion single anytime soon, but I hear Radio 2 playing their tracks pretty frequently, so there is appreciation from that side.

"I saw them at The Forum in Kentish Town, London a long time ago – probably 10 years back. They sounded great and have a presence on stage that makes you feel like you're at a special show. Almost like you're the only one there and the show is actually being performed for you." **MD**

PRESS

Q&A Steve Hogarth

With Marillion defying the odds to be at the top of their game following their 2016 album *F.E.A.R*, their frontman looks back on 30 years of the group's changing fortunes, his worries about alienating their fan base, dragging his bandmates to play at the Royal Albert Hall, and always looking for the path least taken.

Words: David West **Portrait:** Anne-Marie Forker

"You never want to be comfortable. I don't think good art comes from comfort," says Steve Hogarth.

It's now 30 years since Hogarth turned down the offer of playing keyboards with The The in favour of joining Marillion. "I remember my old publisher saying: 'Give it a couple of years,'" he says. "I still don't really think forward that much into the future. It's an uncertain world we live in, and who knows when it's all going to come crashing down. I'm reminded of Ringo [Starr], when somebody asked him how long it [The Beatles] was going to last, he said: 'Maybe a year or two, and I'll open a hairdressers.'"

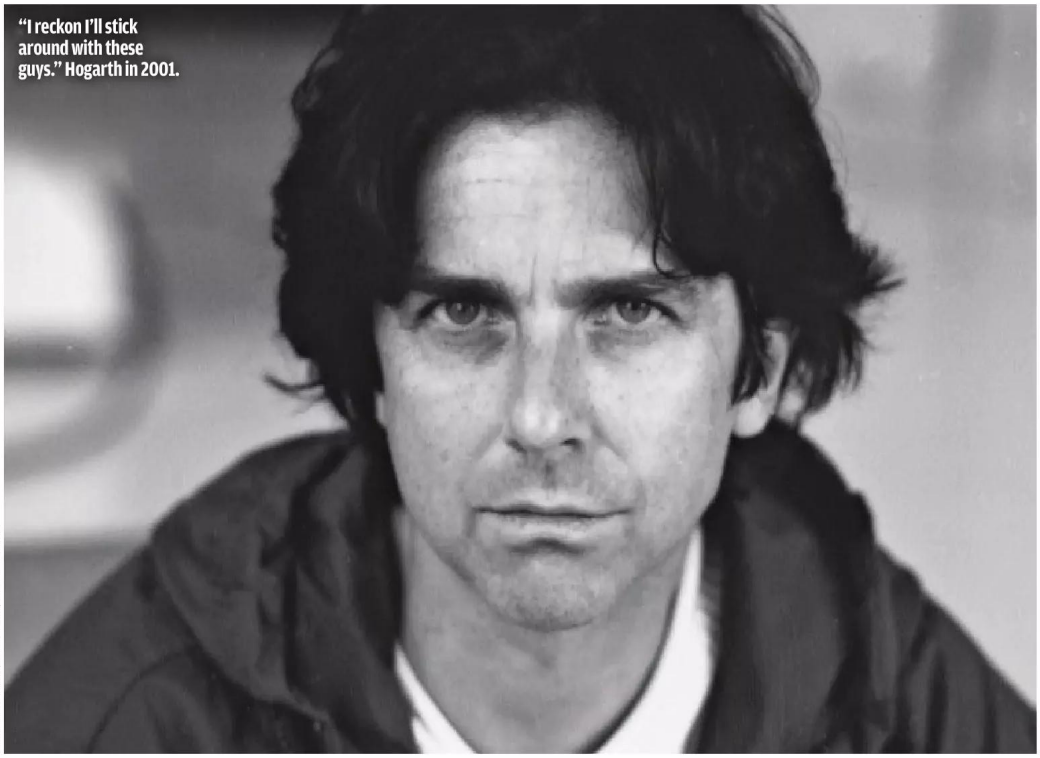
When Hogarth came on board, Marillion were signed to EMI, enabling them to record 1989's *Season's End,* his first album with them, in a manor house near Henley-on-Thames. It was an experience the singer describes as a blissful time. "The sun used to shine every day, and I used to swan around in a big shirt feeling like Lord Byron while girls brought me club sandwiches and Pimm's." The band parted ways with EMI after 1995's *Afraid Of Sunlight,* and they became, albeit perhaps unwittingly, pioneers in crowd-funding when fans raised the money for them to undertake a US tour in 1997. Since then they've become a model for how to thrive as independent artists, and have continued to grow musically and commercially, earning rave reviews and numerous Prog Awards for 2016's *Fuck Everyone And Run,* and putting on their own weekend-long Marillion conventions.

1989's Season's End, the beginning for Hogarth.

> "I know Marillion well enough to know what is the well-trodden path for them and... I've always thought that my job is to stop them treading it."

Playing with the same five guys for 30 years must lead to some sense of creative comfort. Is it still possible to surprise one another musically?

Well, they're all fairly mad, so we're constantly surprising each other. Certain members are less predictable than others. I can usually take an educated guess, for instance, at what Steve Rothery is going to get off on and what's going to leave him cold. I know them well enough to know what is the well-trodden path for them and, rightly or wrongly, I've always thought that my job is to stop them treading it. My job is to find the stuff that surprises them rather than allow them to do the stuff that they could naturally do in their sleep. Whether that means I've denied the world a lot of great music that otherwise might have happened, I don't know. I don't know if they've done that to me. Maybe they haven't. Maybe they should have. The people who produced the records have occasionally kicked me off *my* well-trodden path, and I think that is


"I reckon I'll stick around with these guys." Hogarth in 2001.

MICHEL LINSSEN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Hogarth keeps an eye on the direction Marillion are heading.

a producer's job. The producer's job, to some extent, is to see where something could go and how something could be in the end. It's the vision thing. Nine times out of 10 I've got all of these words and things I want to express, and so I have to determine the shape of something in order to say what I need to say. It can be frustrating to be denied that power, and the producer's job probably is to deny me that power in favour of something which overall might be more satisfying. If you're Bob Dylan, you don't care quite so much about the music, your mission on earth is to get all these words and thoughts out of your system and to tell these stories. I need the other guys to say: "Yeah, but this has to be interesting musically, you can't just do this over one chord for 10 minutes," which I would quite happily do because I'm busy telling a story, I don't give a fuck about the chords. There's always that tension between a lyricist and a bunch of musos. I say that with the greatest respect! [Laughs.]

Coming true? 2016's F.E.A.R.

Fuck Everyone And Run seems very prescient now. Are you disappointed to have been right about the direction current events have taken?

Maybe I'm a human weather vane. Maybe I can see where it's going, I can sense what perhaps the sum total of what our society has become is going to lead to. You can paint a picture of where you think something is inevitably going to land. What you're seeing on TV, reading in the papers, experiencing yourself in daily life, you don't have to be Nostradamus to imagine where that's going to lead. If you end up painting a totally dystopian picture, then I think that's going to be born out of pretentiousness to some extent. You're letting your own idea of yourself and what you ought to be saying and what art should do drive the car, instead of just trying to keep it true and honest and instinctive. When I was working on the album, I was genuinely worried the whole time about what I was saying, mainly because I didn't want to be Bono. I didn't want to be standing on a box with the wind in my hair, trying to put the world right, because I didn't want people yawning, going: "Oh, so it's a protest record." That was my big worry, the whole time we were working on it: what are people going to make of this? Are they just going to think it's a load of pretentious twaddle or is it going to resonate with them? I was scared of the reaction to it.

But I was scared of the reaction to *Brave*. I remember when we were mixing *Brave*, thinking: "Oh my God, nobody is going to get this. We're going to lose the fan base overnight when this comes out!"' And we did lose a lot of people when it came out. Now, the accepted wisdom when you talk to people is that it's this amazing masterwork, a watershed in the band's creative development and blah, blah, blah. But at the time, we all thought: "Jesus Christ, this could be the thing that finishes us. It's weird and we don't even know what it is." EMI didn't know what it was. They didn't know what to do with it. It was the death knell, really, for the band with the major label, because they had no clue how to sell it, so they lost interest. It was dropped from EMI at the same time as Blur was happening. Suddenly there was Britpop, this new movement, and what had we got to do with any of that? They just lost interest at that point. Sometimes, more often than not, when you're creating the music that people

Marillion: from Aylesbury to the Royal Albert Hall.

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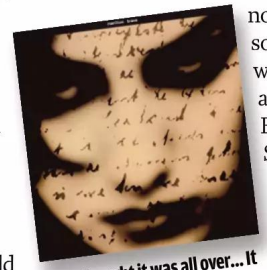

They thought it was all over... It took guts to put out '94's Brave.

> "The more aware any artist is of their demographic or their market, you become less of an artist and you become more of a record company man."

NIELS VAN IPEREN/GETTY IMAGES

Looking at an uncertain future: Steve Hogarth in 1996.

look back on as being hopefully startlingly good, you're mixing it shitting yourself, basically, because you think: "What on earth are people going to make of this?" And that's how I felt.

Marillion provide a model of how to function independently without a major label. Has the demise of the traditional record industry been a bad thing?

I think the problem with the record industry was the A&R departments. Every now and again there was a very good A&R man. We had one when I joined the band, a guy called Nick Gatfield, and he was great. Then he left and other people, who shall remain nameless, arrived and they didn't know their arse from their elbow. Despite not knowing that, they're given this omnipotence to massively influence the direction that artists are lent on to lead towards. That process usually happens via a producer. They'll go: "Why don't you use this producer?" If they can talk you into that, they've got someone whose ear they can whisper into without you knowing. That's the mechanism by which a record company can change the direction of an artist. Sometimes it works – where would Diana Ross be if she'd never worked with Nile Rodgers? She certainly didn't enjoy the process, from what I've read, but she had the biggest hit of her career. Bowie: of all the albums he ever made, *Let's Dance* was his least favourite. That was the one that sold a bazillion copies and bought all his houses and helicopters. It's really the job of the label to try to find a way to make an artist commercial. The mistake they always make, of course, is they try to make you sound like something that was great last year. By the time you've sat down, recorded it, packaged it, mastered it, wrapped it in a ribbon and released it, it's going to be a year from then. So you're trying to create something that was done much better by someone else two years ago. That's when everything stagnates. The A&R departments had the power to create impure, dishonest, stagnant music, and very few A&R men were bright enough to just leave them the hell alone. If you've signed Radiohead, why would you

want to tell them what to do? The reason you signed them is because they're geniuses. Let them do their thing. You don't have to understand it, it doesn't have to sound like ZZ Top or Pink Floyd or any of the things that sold millions of copies.

So in that sense the demise of the music business may have a positive effect on creativity. Whether or not that creativity is ever really enjoyed by a mass market is another question, because the major record labels had the machine with which to get music in front of a lot of people, whether it was on TV on *Top Of The Pops*, or putting enormous posters on railway station platforms. If they really wanted to do it, they could do it. In the new world, that's not nearly so easy.

How do Marillion reach new listeners and get new fans?

I ask myself that question every time I walk out on stage and look at the crowd. We did a gig in Poland at the beginning of this year. I looked out at the crowd and their average age must have been about 24. I was thrilled, but totally, totally bemused. How the hell are these kids hearing this? In a way, if I could answer that question, that might not be good for me, because the more aware any artist is of their demographic or their market, you become less of an artist and you become more of a record company man. I think there is an element of pomp in knowing the answer to that question. It's pompous because you don't really know, you just like the idea of knowing. Who knows why anybody gets off on a piece of music? Music means so many different things to so many different people. For some people it's just something jolly to do the ironing to, for some people it's something to strut their stuff to on a dancefloor, and for some people it's absolutely core to their being. That's probably true of most of our fans. Our music is core to their being. I get emailed all the time, people come up to me and they say: "You've saved my life." Which sounds so silly, but they mean it. I don't know how they find it, but they find it.

You've said in the past that you don't enjoy watching or listening back to your live performances. But doesn't being a frontman require the person to be a bit of a narcissist?

I think I was a narcissist when I was younger, and with good reason, because I was pretty damn good looking. When I was younger I wasn't singing nearly as well as I am now, so I couldn't bear to listen back to myself because I wished I'd been a better singer. As I've gotten older I've become a better singer, but I look in the mirror and go: "Oh my Christ!" [Laughs] The problem has shifted. I don't know. I think I'm too old to remember the answer to that question. You grow up, you get uglier, you put a few pounds on, narcissism fades away. That's probably the answer. Not only that, but I am a perfectionist. I think any half-decent artist is a perfectionist, because that's why they're half-decent most of the time. Unless they're one of those White Stripes bands that sounds like a car crash and that's the whole point but they're really good at it. That's fine, that's brilliant. In which case you've got to have the guts to let it out there knowing that it's not right, because that's the point of it. We [Marillion] are not like that. We're all craftsmen and we have to fight that a bit. If you're a perfectionist you're never going to be happy with anything, all you're going to hear is what's wrong with it. When you make studio albums, you've got a better chance of getting happy because you can dick about with it until the cows come home, but live, there it is. It's out there, warts and all, and when you watch it or hear it, all you hear or see is the warts. That's all you hear. You just hear what's wrong with it.

In which case it's even more surprising that you've released so many live albums.

I don't listen to any of them! [Laughs] A lot of our live albums, the more official

For all Marillion's success, there's no sitting back and taking things easy.

KEVIN NIXON/FUTURE OWNS

In the air tonight: performing at the Marillion Weekend in Holland, March 2017.

WILL IRELAND/FUTURE OWNS

ones, have had an element of craft, they've been multi-tracked, our genius producer Michael Hunter has mixed them and he's presenting us in our very best light. But even so, it's not something I would go home and put on. The focus has to be on the next thing. That's where your energy needs to be. There's nothing you can do about what you've already done. You can sit and bask in it and go: "Ooh, aren't we great?" But you've got to be a pretty sad character to want to do that. What you should be doing is going: "Actually, we're not very good at all, are we? We need to get better."

Marillion put on their own weekend-long festivals. Would you ever want to do something like play at Glastonbury?

Oh, Christ, in a heartbeat. I'd love to do Glastonbury, absolutely. But even that question isn't a simple question, because Glastonbury is a complex thing. It's loads of stages all over the place. There's a thing that takes place in America called South By South-West, in Texas, and all the cool, up-and-coming bands do it. The reality of it is, when you get there, there are bands everywhere, in every club, every theatre, every space, and Glastonbury is a bit like that. It has that amazing atmosphere, of course, for the people. But from a band's point of view, if you're not on one of the big stages or one of the big nights, then it's a gig. If you're on one of the big stages, then it's a trip, it's something career-changing, or it can be. If it doesn't change your career it certainly leaves you with an amazing memory. But we've never been asked to do it, for whatever reason. I just don't think we're big enough to headline or second-headline Glastonbury, and we're too big to do any of the other little side stages. We're in that awkward place.

> "I remember when we were mixing *Brave*, thinking: 'Oh my God, nobody is going to get this. We're going to lose the fan base overnight when this comes out!'"

That said, Marillion seem to have hit another sweet spot in their career, playing two nights at London's Royal Albert Hall in 2018. When the deal with EMI ended, could you have imagined filling two nights at a venue like that at this stage of the game?

Perhaps we should have thought more carefully about all of it, but we didn't. We just cracked on and got on with it. We've focused, always, on the music: "Let's try to make a great record." It was never: "Let's try and sell out this slightly bigger place." Having said that, ever since I joined the band I've been bitching on at them to do the Royal Albert Hall, and they've been going: "Why would we want to do that?" I've been going: "What do you mean, why would you want to do that?" "We'd rather do Wembley Arena." "Wembley Arena's a shithole!" "What?" But they never got it. I dragged them reluctantly towards the Royal Albert Hall. It took me 28 years, we finally did it, and it was incredible. If we'd have been a bit brighter, we could never have imagined doing the Royal Albert Hall when we parted company with EMI. We did our 10, 15 years in the wilderness that most artists do at some point. People like Sinatra, you just thought he was always huge. He wasn't. At one point he didn't have a pot to piss in. Nina Simone was nearly on the street at the middle period of her life and now she's this goddess, and rightly so. Van Morrison. All of them. You've got to do your time in the wilderness, and if you get through that and you arrive in some kind of sweet spot, as you say, there's always this assumption that's where you've always been. But it ain't. The reality is, it does ebb and flow, and at the moment we've had a couple of great years, probably because of that album [*F.E.A.R.*].

2019's Marillion With Friends From The Orchestra album.

That album has lifted us. The five-star review in the *Guardian* probably made a few of us sit up and go: "What?!" Maybe a few people who otherwise would have completely written us off thought: "I'll check that out, then. That might be worth at least having one ear on it." I'd like to think if anybody has one ear on us, they're going to be well shocked in a positive way, they're going to go: "Christ, I had no idea there was this much to them." That's what I hope and pray for, because I think that's what we deserve."

"I was trying to paint a picture of someone mowing their lawn in a quiet garden as a storm comes towards them. It's an ecological storm, a financial storm; it's a humanitarian storm. It's just foreboding."

Steve Hogarth

The New Kings

A band's 18th album has no right to sound as invigorating, ambitious, angry, emotional and exciting as **Marillion's** 2016 masterpiece *F*** Everyone And Run*. The band tell *Prog* about their inspirations, creative processes, and hopes and fears for *FEAR*.

Words: Rich Wilson Images: Kevin Nixon

It's an early summer morning and *Prog* is in the Buckinghamshire countryside, where the sound of bees and bird song surrounds the leafy rural business estate Marillion call home. It's been a while since *Prog* visited their Racket Club studios and there have been a few changes. The operation is now substantially larger, with office space created in an adjacent unit, and a *Kayleigh* gold disc is disappointingly no longer pinned on a toilet wall.

The challenge for any artist would be to transform such a utilitarian space into one that has the suitably soothing visual dynamic and atmosphere needed for creativity to flourish. The windowless, cramped control room – which in an unadorned state would possess a claustrophobic, cell-like presence – has been suitably transformed in a manner that *Changing Rooms'* Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen would approve of. Severe partition walls are painted a striking red and partially covered by oriental curtains, and a considerable amount of material is bunched on the ceiling, giving the room the air of a Mongolian yurt. Scattered among the stacked boxes of leads are candles, Chinese dragons and a gigantic, rocket-shaped lava lamp, with acoustic and bass guitars resting against a wall.

The central control panel is surrounded by the late-night detritus of producer Michael Hunter, with an unkempt pile of mints, paper clips, dice, playing cards and vitamin tablets remaining from the recording and mixing sessions that have only just been completed. It feels like the welcoming lounge of a hippie flat, and there's a certain truth to that. With tough recording deadlines and a penchant for working around the clock, an adjacent store room has the unexpected addition of a double bed, TV and makeshift wardrobe. This, it turns out, is where Hunter has been living over recent weeks, in a lifestyle that brings a fresh perspective to the concept of studio fever and which has given him the look of a man who has been existing in a permanent state of jet lag.

It's the friendly, bearded face of Hunter who appears to start the playback as *Prog* settles down at the desk to listen to the freshly completed final master of Marillion's new album, the startlingly titled *F*** Everyone And Run (FEAR)*.

There's already a sense of expectation about this recording. Band members and management have been actively declaring on social media that the album is potentially the finest record they have ever made. Such audacious pronouncements and marketing hype around new releases are to be expected, but as the album progresses, it becomes clear that there's an unexpected, dazzling truth to those statements.

If you believe the maxim that longer is better, you'll be happy to hear that three of the five tracks here extend past 15 minutes. They're lovingly crafted musical journeys that have all the nuances of a 'classic' Marillion album. This is the sound of a band with a revived sense of self-respect and belief, defiantly shouting, "We are Marillion and this is what we do," and not overtly trying to get down with the kids. It's an all-consuming recording that has an intensity to both the lyrics and the music that is at times overwhelming and emotionally draining. Indeed, after our first listen, Hunter returns to comment on the shocked look in *Prog*'s eyes, before wryly quipping that having spent well over a year in these confines, he understands more than anyone the effect this music can have.

Singer Steve Hogarth is the first of the band to appear, dressed in a leather jacket, Elvis Presley T-shirt and shades, and looking every bit the rock star. He bounces Tigger-like into the control room, warmly embracing Hunter before declaring that this small room was where "all the magic happened". With the road crew then arriving and starting to remove equipment for the band's mini-European tour, it's decided to decamp to a local hotel restaurant for an extended lunch.

We're soon tailing Hogarth's Mini on narrow country lanes, as he zips around corners at a speed and ease that indicates a familiarity with the route. As he flies around another blind bend, fear suddenly crosses the mind that this piece might end up transforming into a horrific obituary piece, with *Prog* the first witness on the scene.

Mercifully, the journey is uneventful and short, and we're soon settling down with the rest of the band in a very English, walled garden restaurant. It's noticeable how, despite the presence of countless other customers, the band are never once pestered for autographs or photos. They're successful enough to ensure they can make a healthy living from their music, but without the pitfalls that come with mega-stardom. As keyboard player Mark Kelly wisely describes it, they exist in a "Goldilocks zone", which few of their peers are fortunate enough to have.

Marillion shot exclusively by *Prog*, July 2016. L-R: Mark Kelly, Pete Trewavas, Steve

"We're successful enough and have enough resources to be able to do exactly what we want, but we're not so successful that we can do fucking nothing. We're still hungry."

Mark Kelly

"That's exactly the point really," he says. "We're successful enough and have enough resources to be able to do exactly what we want, but we're not so successful that we can do fucking nothing. We're still hungry. It really is that Goldilocks zone. If we were less successful, we'd be put in a position where we had to put more albums out just to keep the money coming in. I'm also sure that if we were far more successful, we probably wouldn't bother."

The new album has been four years in the making, a gap that would be financially unsustainable for most acts, but with Marillion's ongoing cunning plan for financing themselves via pre-order campaigns and their regular conventions, they've freed themselves from record label ties and any overbearing time pressure. Such autonomy has enabled their music to grow organically, and the results are striking. Yet the band still haven't managed to lose the dread of writing new music, and the experiences of creating their last album, *Sounds That Can't Be Made*, remained with them as they began writing again.

"Looking back at that last album, I can say it was more fraught with problems – the beginning was really unpleasant and the end was really fraught," admits Hogarth, before adding with a knowing smile that "the bit in the middle was okay".

The truncated method of writing and a last-minute panic to complete the recording meant the final parts were being recorded on the road, and nobody in the band had heard the final mixes until they were presented to them as a fait accompli.

"It was one of those situations where we were recording bits and pieces in different places," recalls Kelly. "When the mixes finally started coming together, we were in hotel rooms trying to listen to the mixes and hearing things that different members of the band had done for the first time. It was like, 'What's that? I didn't know you were going to play that guitar part over my keyboards!'"

With that, guitarist Steve Rothery glances upwards at Kelly and smiles, before adding somewhat dryly, "And vice versa, I might add..."

It's the kind of banter you would expect from a bunch of mates in a pub on a Friday night, and it's genuinely

refreshing. There are those bands who, to outsiders, appear to be close friends, but are in fact strangers away from the studio or the confines of the tour bus. Indeed, only their inner circle will know if it's the same with Marillion, but they don't give that impression, and they still have an easy comfort with each other that ensures conversations flow. Silent, knowing looks are regularly exchanged, and they never pass up an opportunity to gently rib each other. It's a familiarity that this quintet have built up in the 27 years since Hogarth joined the band, and it has ensured that even though the first few weeks of a writing session are always laden with frustration, they now have enough self-awareness and understanding not to get irritated with each other's foibles.

"Oh yeah, we're all completely bonkers, or eccentric in our own way," admits Rothery with a smile. "But we do forgive each other and if we do fall out these days, it's always a storm in a teacup really."

"Certainly, when the pressure is on, we can be a bit snappy with each other," interjects Kelly, "But generally, we still have fun together, still enjoy each other's company."

Hogarth indicates that of all the members of Marillion, he finds the idea of writing the most harrowing. Although the band have now concocted a way of working that over recent years has become relatively straightforward, his anxiety appears to date back to 1991's *Holidays In Eden*. The music on their Hogarth-era debut *Seasons End* had, for the most part, been written prior to the singer joining the band, and it was a painless process to add lyrics and his distinctive vocal phrasings to those recordings. By the time they needed to record a follow-up, both parties searched for a method that worked, but with the band taking time to jam ideas and Hogarth preferring to take an idea and quickly complete it, the rumours were that the singer needed to take time away to have a long lie down.

"I think I was sent to have a lie down actually," he chuckles heartily. "There's a difference. It didn't help though."

"That really was the worst time," suggests drummer Ian Mosley from behind his permanently shaded eyes. "It was when we had a completely blank canvas and we had done the one album with Steve, and a lot of music had been written already for that album anyway. So suddenly we are all sitting in a room together, thinking, 'What are we supposed to be doing?'"

Over recent years, their methodology has become finely tuned, with the band jamming endlessly for weeks, trying to find those unconsciously created musical nuggets that occasionally rise to the surface. These would be carefully catalogued by Mike Hunter, who would then have the unenviable task of listening to the hundreds of hours of music before identifying a still immense list of ideas he felt had potential. Those segments would then be sent to the band, who would each rank them, and it would be those musical seeds that everyone liked which would be selected for further work.

It's an unusual way of working, but it seems to eradicate a lot of potential internal tension, especially if there's a split between musicians over which ideas are worth pursuing. Although preferring to eschew the limelight and apparently not wanting to receive any credit for the work he's put into the album, the praise for Hunter is unanimous. He is, according to the band, the sixth member of Marillion.

"What shouldn't be understated in all of this is really how much Mike Hunter put into this," exclaims Hogarth with conviction. "We write initially by jamming. So there are hours and hours of stuff – probably a lot of which doesn't even sound like music – that's recorded, and then he has the job of sitting in his loft and pulling out anything that's remotely something. Then he'll play the cream of what he's got to us, we'll distil it and all vote on that. So out of that, what might have been 400 hours of stuff, we'll probably choose 50 ideas.

"Often we would wonder when on earth we had recorded what he was playing us. I'd be like, 'No, I have no memory of us ever doing that,' and he'd say, 'Well it was only last week!'

"Without Mike, my God, one of us would have had to have done that and it really is unenviable. I've had files from him at three and four in the morning because he couldn't sleep and he's got up and done something.

"I suspect he might have more of a handle on what it is about us that excites people than we do. I mean, I struggle. It's great that they get excited, but sometimes I can't work out what it is and what it is that ingrains itself so deeply in people. We're not the kind of band that people say, 'Oh, they're alright.' It turns into some kind of lifelong crusade."

"Working that way does work, and it stops us falling out unnecessarily," adds bassist Pete Trewavas, who is as amiable in person as his on-stage persona would indicate. "There was so much music that it gave us so many starting points if we stumbled across something we couldn't agree on. The other thing Mike would do was put sections and bits and pieces together. Sometimes we might be out on tour and he would just mess about and say, 'Well these are quite nice. What happens if I do something with them?' We'd come back off tour and he'd play us things and say, 'I've been having a think about this. This is just an idea – what do you think?' It's really great to have somebody like that who has got your back.

"In a strange kind of way, because of the way we're working, we're becoming more creative because we're choosing the times that we're going to do it. If you're in a room thinking, 'We've got to come up with a song today – everything has been rubbish for the first week, we've got to do something,' it's just the wrong place to start really."

One way of alleviating the routine and pressure during the final stages of writing has been for Marillion to traipse 90 miles west from their base to Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios near Bath. The notion behind this is that they're able to escape the daily routine of life at Racket, a working life that's almost a nine-to-five existence, with demands at home, as well as the business decisions which need to be made, all interrupting the creative flow.

"We can be like a gang again, rather than a firm of architects, which is how we feel the rest of the time," claims Hogarth. "Because we kind of manage ourselves as well, along with Lucy [Jordache, Marillion co-manager], we're part of the decision-making process and there's an hour or so of every day just doing emails. You know, 'What do you think about this? Shall we have an argument about that?' There are so many decisions to be made that aren't strictly about music, you can feel that you're no longer in a band and you've now got a proper job, which is the reason everybody gets

The Invisible Man
How would Marillion describe producer Michael Hunter?

Pete Trewavas: "'God', maybe, or is that too strong? He puts everything into it and he has such a great way with his vision of music."
Steve Hogarth: "He's very good at card tricks and does descend into a vagrant during the time of recording. He's a great catalyst and we would never have made this record without him."
Mark Kelly: "He's a talented, miserable fucker but we love him. He's incredibly hard-working and calling him our George Martin would be doing him a great disservice really, as he's more than that and not just a producer. He doesn't want to be credited at all and doesn't want anyone to know what he's done because he had a bad experience. In 2007 we made *Somewhere Else*, and we all went, 'This is great,' and loved it. And he got completely torn to pieces by a few fans on the Marillion online forum who didn't like the album for whatever reason. He took it so personally that he's shied away since then."
Steve Rothery: "He's actually a very funny guy. He's quite fragile in that respect and doesn't have the ego of a musician or even of a successful producer. He knows what he believes in and will do his best, but he's quite a sensitive soul at the same time." **RW**

"Sometimes, being the wrong side of three quarters of a bottle of red makes you make different music."

Steve Hogarth

into a band in the first place. So to find yourself back in a proper job through the back door is terrible."

Picking up on Hogarth's comment, Mosley briefly interrupts eating his recently served sausages and mash before dryly quipping, "I think you'll find it's a long way from a proper job..."

"Yeah, okay, but we do have to get involved," continues Hogarth, laughing at his gaffe. "So getting off to Real World, we're all living there and all sleeping there. And the other problem about having your own studio is that, with perhaps the exception of one gin and tonic, you can't have a drink because you've got to drive home at the end of the day. So that's not very creative in a rock'n'roll sense either. Sometimes, being the wrong side of three quarters of a bottle of red makes you make different music.

"When you're jamming and playing together, you're in a slightly different state of mind. So to be able to work late, stop and have dinner, and then go back to the studio space at nine or 10 at night, there's always a different atmosphere at night to during the day. It pulls us together as a gang and it gets you away from the 'Oh my God, the drains have just exploded.' You can leave that with the missus for a week and you can just immerse yourself in the music.

"They've got this big screen in the studio at Real World because they do soundtracks for films as well occasionally. So we can drop the big screen in the evening and just put a movie on, with the sound off, and just have that running while we're jamming. So we'd be in the dark and there would be a vibe going as well."

The elongated nature of the songs on *FEAR* will undoubtedly delight many *Prog* readers, and although the band have gradually returned to writing such monumental material over recent years, to find a majority of the songs extend to the length of their often derided 1982 track *Grendel* does come as a surprise. One problem facing musicians with a long career is that interview quotes from the past can never be escaped, and lie waiting to be thrown unceremoniously in your face years later. Mark Kelly's brief departure to the bar proves fortuitous for him, as the band are reminded that he once claimed: "We could do a 15-minute fart into a paper bag and some people would be happier with that than a three-minute classic." The revelation is met with loud laughter around the table.

"Ah yes, the wisdom of Mark Kelly," grins Rothery. "You really can't put a price on that. But the reason for the songs being longer is really down to the lyrics and having the space to tell the story."

Certainly the issues covered by those lyrics are weighty ones and any attempt to cram them into a three-minute format would be rather crass, rendering them meaningless. The subjects they delve into are worthy of deep exploration, and with the band taking their time to conclude their musical backdrop, that delay allowed Hogarth to expand them further.

"I mean, that's the frustrating part of my job," he notes. "I sit looking at a set of words for, like, four years, waiting for somebody to get happy with a chord change so I can sing three lines on something. But on the positive side, having that amount of time does give me a lot of room to ruminate, go over the words again, tear them apart and rearrange them and add things to them. I'm under pressure for those lyrics not to be completely rubbish either, so it's not just four pounds of words."

"Steve has these lyrics written in various forms," adds the recently reseated Kelly, unaware of the gentle ribbing he has been subjected to in his absence. "We're jamming and throughout the process, Steve is constantly listening and thinking, 'What does this music feel like? What lyric matches this piece of music?' Sometimes it works and those moments end up becoming the building blocks for the songs, and over a long time, it comes together.

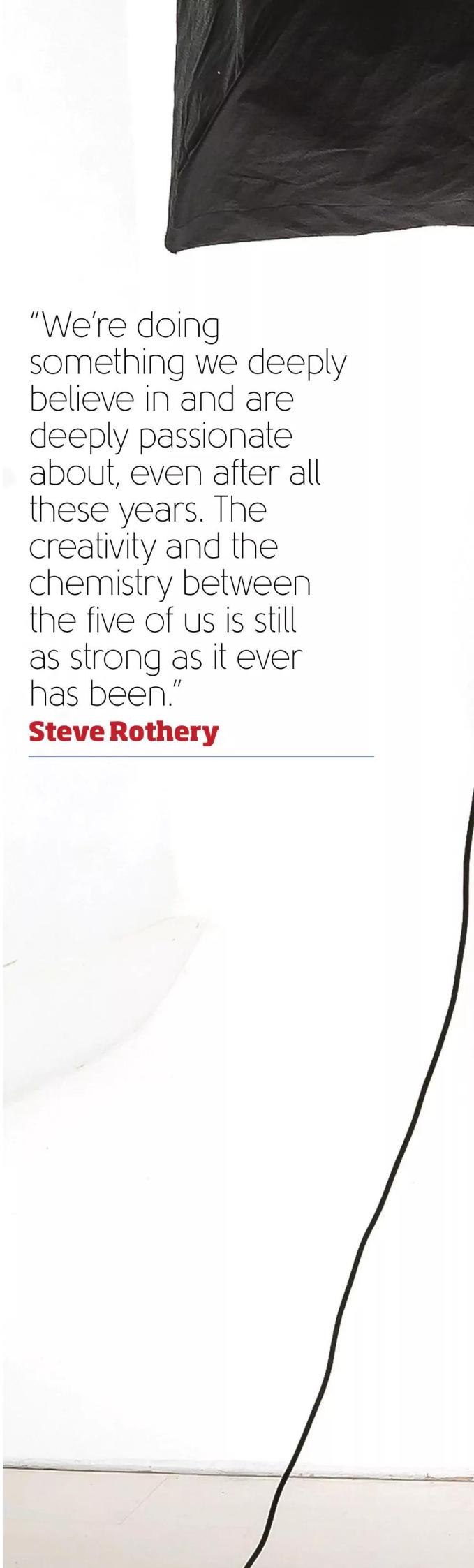
"There are loads of bits of music with the same lyrics on that haven't quite captured the moment and haven't been quite right. So they got left, and what remained was the music that perfectly matched the words, and over time the songs got longer. Better writers would just have gone, 'We're going to write the music that perfectly matches the lyrics.'"

Aside from the masterful music, the lyrics are similarly adroit, possessing thought-provoking passages that often venture into the dangerous area of politics. That's not to suggest Marillion are suddenly turning into Billy Bragg – these are far from unsubtle, chest-beating protest songs – but there are undertones that delve into areas some may find controversial and may vehemently disagree with. They cover Syrian refugees being denied access to Europe, the greed of bankers and oligarchs, Hogarth's apparent feeling of shame at being British, and a sense of the loss of a nation. Remarkably, many of his words demonstrate an acute perception, given they were written years ago, and are becoming even more relevant and accurate with the passage of time.

"This album really is about a sense of foreboding," says Hogarth. "What is kind of interesting is that a lot of

"We're doing something we deeply believe in and are deeply passionate about, even after all these years. The creativity and the chemistry between the five of us is still as strong as it ever has been."

Steve Rothery



CALUMET

these words are about three years old. Now we're all sitting here, post-Brexit, on the day the Chilcot report into the Iraq war comes out. But all these words were on paper years ago and some even date back to unused jams from the last album. So it's about that foreboding and a feeling that everything is going to change in this country.

"I was trying to paint a picture of someone mowing their lawn in a quiet garden as a storm comes towards them. It's an ecological storm, a financial storm; it's a humanitarian storm. It's a feeling that there's a sort of watershed coming. I don't know what it is, but it's just foreboding. If there's a central theme to the record, it's that – plus the fact we brought this on ourselves, and a consequential sense of shame."

These are weighty issues and the shame Hogarth refers to is palpable. It's a heartbreaking, internal self-flagellation that has visibly been troubling him, yet the reality is that there's little the masses, or musicians, can seemingly do to stop those in positions of power. It's perhaps this realisation that has given rise to a barely contained resentment that surfaces on tracks such as *El Dorado* and *The New Kings*. Is Hogarth as internally furious as the lyrics often indicate?

"*The New Kings* is really a song about how the old systems of democracy have become overwhelmed and compromised by money and corporations," he explains. "Along with the fact that the gap between rich and poor is widening all the time. There's also an overall loss of faith in what this country represents to me. I was always quietly very proud of being English, and that went for me with Iraq, and I've been quietly ashamed of being English ever since. I find that very hard to forgive that there are certain individuals who took that away from me, and that is one hell of a huge thing to lose.

"The last section of *The New Kings* is a sister section of *El Dorado* and is about the romantic notion you believed England to be when you were a kid. There's so much scope to talk about all the clichés – the bankers, the hideous bonuses that they're paid for presiding over things that fail. So to answer your question, I guess I've got so much simmering resentment at that loss of faith that it produced *The New Kings* and *El Dorado*, which are two of the longer songs on the album. *El Dorado* is similarly themed, along with the fact that there's a sense of shame over the migrant crisis."

All of this gives Hogarth the demeanour of a man with the weight of the world on his shoulders. There are passages during these tracks that are clearly immensely personal, describing how he is *'becoming harder to live with'* and *'you can't see into my head'*. Such words imply that there's some degree of inner turmoil that affects not just himself, but those around him. Is that a fair assessment, and why does he put himself through probing such themes if they're affecting him so deeply? Surely there are other subjects that would be just as creatively fulfilling?

"I'm just not living like I used to, just to have a good time, all the time," he says, lifting an eyebrow and obviously fully aware he's just quoted Spinal Tap's Viv Savage. "You know, as you get old, once you're 60, you're not really in a position to live for those ideals. You think, 'I'm getting on now – if I want to say something, I should make it something important.' Yes, it does mess with me a bit talking about these things, but I've made a lot of records and what am I going to do? Write another record with another eight love songs on it?' I'm sure someone else will do that. So yes, maybe I should say something important."

There's a pause in the conversation, with everyone around the table probably mulling over their own mortality and middle age while silently sipping their drinks. Such maudlin thoughts are only brief, as Mark Kelly attempts to violently dissuade what *Prog* is reliably informed is a Blandford Fly from leeching on his blood. Seemingly a creature capable of inflicting serious damage on any unaware victim, it's eventual disappearance allows the keyboard player to comment on his concerns over Hogarth's lyrical openness, especially those that, superficially at least, appear to delve into his private life.

"We do wonder sometimes, Steve," says Kelly before silently pondering the wisest choice of words. "Well, it's quite difficult to say this. You're quite brave in some of things you say. You say things that are extremely

Above: *Anoraknophobia*, Marillion's first crowdfunded album.

Pledge Pioneers

In 2000, Marillion were the first band to use crowdfunding

The concept of fans pledging money online to fund an artist's album is now commonplace, but Marillion pioneered the idea by persuading their following to pay months in advance for *Anoraknophobia*. It's a business model they've regularly returned to in the intervening years, with fans being rewarded for that loyalty by having their names printed in the credits of expansive limited editions. In a surprising business move, for *FEAR* they've decided against arranging the advance ordering of the album themselves and have instead joined up with PledgeMusic.

Part of the reason for that change is that they're victims of their own success. The large amount of orders have become difficult for the staff at Racket to deal with, especially when the unavoidable emails flood in due to a fulfilment company making errors and losing orders.

"The customer service aspect of it was just getting mental and taking up all the time" says Hogarth. "At the beginning of all of this, we had a look at it and thought, 'Yes, we could do it, but we'll need another three or four members of staff, and we'll need more premises.' We could have afforded it and done it, but we thought, 'Is this what we really want to be doing?' We're a band and we don't really want to become a label. We don't want to become a proper record company.

"It goes back to what we were saying earlier – people get into bands to avoid all that shit, not to be taking it on. Pledge approached us and said, 'You're the inventors of the whole crowdfunding thing.

Right: the pledge page for new album *FEAR*.

FREDDY BILLQVIST/PRESS

We like to think we're now the flagship of it. Why don't we come together?' We are still tinkering with the business model and trying to work out the best way."

"To be fair, we're not the ones doing the work," says Kelly. "But it is a bit of a headache when you're getting packaging made and coordinating all this stuff. Then you've got a bunch of people at fulfilment companies who aren't used to packing and shipping CDs. We've used different companies in the past for the fulfilment of the pre-orders and they usually fuck something up. Something happens. Some people don't get them, or they're late, or a whole bag of them goes missing.

Ahead of the game: Marillion led the crowdfunding movement in music.

"There was also the potential to have the crossover to PledgeMusic's existing database as well, and I'm not sure how successful that was. As a project, it's been a good experience but we're undecided about what we're going to do for the next one." **RW**

personal and it would make me feel uncomfortable..."

"Only if I was married to him," deadpans Rothery.

"But there's also that thing where people think, 'Oh, he's just making this up to make a point,'" continues Kelly. "Yet there's always the thought that people might think you're talking about yourself, even when you're not."

"Well, you know me well enough to know how true they often are," confesses Hogarth. "That's part of what I have to deal with really. History has shown me that whenever I've done something like that in the past, and thought to myself, 'God, is this too much?' people have responded really positively to it.

"The other freedom of expression I have as a lyricist comes from being in this band. I know I can get away with being honest and it won't terminate our career. For most artists that would be the end. Even bands like U2, there would be a limit to how much Bono could open his mouth politically without damaging their sales base. We're not in that mainstream so we don't even have to consider those compromises. Nobody in the band has ever come along to me and said, 'Are you sure you want to say that?' I'm quite surprised really."

> "There's no musical uncertainty on this new record, and there's an embracing of what we are and what we do."
> **Steve Rothery**

However, there does need to be a unanimous consensus within the group that any potential sources of lyrical controversy are worth the trouble. Hogarth may never have been edited or censured, but with certain topics guaranteed to raise hackles, Marillion need to be comfortable with the expressed sentiments. Indeed, the band may not have a reputation for political commentary, but they have had their moments. There was *Forgotten Sons* on their debut that dealt with the situation in Northern Ireland in the early 80s; a tale of the rise of Austrian fascism during the same decade on *White Russian*; and most controversially of all, *Gaza* on their last album. The conviction Hogarth espoused during that song was that, as he puts it now, "a child shouldn't have to grow up in a place like this", but even the song title caused alarm in those all too ready to take offence.

"That was something we had to agree was a statement we all wanted to make," reasons Rothery. "It was a big decision. We all had to stand behind it and in that respect it was probably one of the most important songs we've ever written. We knew we would come in for a certain amount of abuse. It was so sad when we posted it online – within days, the comments from both sides became a microcosm of the situation itself. There were these radically opposing viewpoints and there was no possibility of any reconciliation there. The fact that we were even writing a song about Gaza led to this tirade. It was just bizarre."

"The thing is, if you believe in what you're saying, it doesn't really matter," says Hogarth defiantly. "What does matter is if someone comes back and exposes something that makes you think you were naive. I tried so hard with *Gaza* not to make it naive rubbish. It was such a hard song to write from the moment I realised the band were hell-bent on putting it on the record. I had to make sure there wasn't any nonsense in the lyrics that someone who'd just seen a documentary could've written. I wasn't saying it was this person or this country's fault. I didn't want to be bashing Israel, or saying anything that would mean I could be perceived as being an anti-Semite. I still was, though, and there were people who called me an anti-Semite before they had even seen the words. So when you're dealing with that, you can't win.

"There were those of the Jewish faith who felt – probably rightly – that some white English boy shouldn't be passing comment. I did worry that here I was, in a leafy part of middle England, eating my salad, talking about how Israel is treating Palestinians on the Gaza Strip. You know, who the fuck am I to be saying that? So yes, it has only been *Gaza* when we all sat around going, 'What are we doing here?' We had to ask ourselves if we were really sure."

The Great Escape

It's been over 20 years since Marillion were signed to a major UK record label, and they're clearly not missing them...

Mark Kelly: "I always remember that horrible let-down of making an album. There was a great build-up and you release a single, and it goes into the charts for one week. It then falls out of the charts, it's all over, and you go, 'Oh.' You shouldn't really be judging all that work on the basis of something like that. And that became the focus really. There were the commercial pressures of a record label paying you all that money and they just want sales."

Steve Hogarth: "They're not doing it because they love you. If they're really honest, they're not even doing it because they're excited about the music. They're excited about the new Coldplay album because they can hear there's a hit that's going straight on the radio and is worth a million quid. I'm talking here about the people who work on the top floor, not the people who work in the offices.

"Another thing I learned at EMI, which really shocked me, was that the people in the offices actually had no kind of clue about what kind of deal you're on, what your royalty payments are like, whether you're getting one per cent or 90 per cent of an album. They just assume that all the artists are paid really well for what they do, and all get rich. I remember speaking to a girl there and telling her what we earned and her jaw hit the floor. She had no idea. So there are only four people in these major labels, in the business affairs department, who have any clue what the artists are being paid.

"Back in those days, I don't think we felt directly pressured to change the music. The way they would exert their influence was, they would bring a producer in and they would whisper in his ear. So the phone would ring and it would be, 'Is there this and is there that? Have you made sure there's enough of that?' So that way, they didn't have to come to us as artists and say, 'Can you sing it a bit more like that and is there enough chorus?' because they were whispering at the producer. So the label would always insist on appointing a producer because he was their control system. Who knows what the fuck you can do with artists, but you can whisper in a producer's ear. Thankfully, that was a long time ago." **RW**

The quandary over the lyrics also extends to their music. They might be 18 albums into their career, but even when they've recorded an album as genuinely accomplished as *FEAR*, there remains an inherent lack of self-belief. It's not a modesty – fake or genuine – but the band all possess a nagging sensation that the album may not be up to muster. The stresses of that mindset and an approaching deadline meant they, and especially producer Hunter, have been under a certain amount of strain over recent weeks.

"He was nearly off the roof, and very close to the edge, a fortnight ago when the deadline was approaching," reveals Hogarth. "We were all going, 'Is he alright?' because he's been working so hard as it means so much to him, as it does to all of us. So we were all pretty edgy as the deadline came up. You do reach a point when you think, 'Is any of this any good?' There's a point when you get really excited about something, then that passes and you wonder if we're working each other up, convincing ourselves that this is amazing when it isn't. So it's always great to get it out into the world and see how people react."

It does appear, though, that the band do at least accept that there's an exceptionally high quality to all of the tracks on this album. There are no moment of weakness, no songs where dance beats have been inharmoniously added, and with *Prog*'s reassurances that this is undoubtedly one of their finest recordings, they become less guarded.

"I do think there's a consistency to this album which is unusual," says Rothery. "There are only a handful of albums where I think we've made that happen, which for me are *Afraid Of Sunlight*, and probably *Marbles* and *Sounds That Can't Be Made*. So this is really up there and at the same time, it has such a broad scope of power to it. Maybe this album is good because we took the time, although that doesn't have to be the case, as *Afraid Of Sunlight* came together relatively quickly. I honestly can't think of any way we could improve that album, which for me is a rare thing to say. There's no musical uncertainty on this new record, and there's an embracing of what we are and what we do."

"For me, there's usually one song on every album that, and not wishing to be too blunt, I wouldn't care for and really wouldn't be unhappy if it got left off," declares Kelly. "But because we're a five-piece band and we all have different musical tastes, you agree on the songs that eventually go on an album. For me, this album has five really good songs on it."

Marillion remain in an enviable position. There are few acts who have been as consistent over the last 35 years, and who have survived and thrived after the loss of a recognisable lead singer. They remain a hugely viable band, with a fiercely loyal fan base, owning their own recording studio and having the ability to record exactly the music they want, without fearing the appearance of a suited A&R man. There are even fewer bands who could even contemplate having their 18th album as one of their finest. To

Marillion show no *FEAR*! Shot exclusively for *Prog*, July 2016.

"We're not the kind of band that people say, 'Oh, they're alright.' It turns into some kind of lifelong crusade."

Steve Hogarth

what do they owe their success?

"I think we can afford to do it and that's part of the secret," states Hogarth. "The reason a lot of creative artists just stop is because they're signed to a major label who lose interest if they haven't had a hit for a couple of albums. We've got our own studio and a lot of artists would give their right arm to have a place where they can just go to work, without having to go cap in hand to a label. We're not millionaires but we stay above water."

"But it's also the reason we do it as well," muses Rothery. "Some people get into music as a career and it's really nothing to do with the music – it's just a job they want to do. That's never been the case with us. We're doing something we deeply believe in and are deeply passionate about, even after all these years. The creativity and the chemistry between the five of us is still as strong as it ever has been. We can be satisfied with the end result without having to tick any boxes or please the record company. We're not trying to make records for the radio. We just want to make something that we, the five of us sitting here, enjoy. Hopefully when it gets out in the world, people will enjoy it as well.

"I think for us, with Mike's help, for us to come up with something so strong for our 18th studio album is quite remarkable. We also wrote a lot more music than we used, and have a lot of great ideas that are on the shelf. It would be good if it didn't take four years for the next album. If we could do it in two or three maybe."

Rothery's final comment provokes a look of horror on Hogarth's face.

"Well, you knock yourself out Steve, I'll be with you in 2018," the singer laughs, standing up and grabbing his sunglasses and car keys from the table. "There's nothing wrong in it taking two years, just as long as we don't have to record it in the next two years..."

TRIBAL *gathering*

It's hard to tell whether it's the band or their devoted fans who have the most fun at the legendary **Marillion Weekenders**. In 2017, *Classic Rock* travelled to Holland to find out.

Words: **Philip Wilding** Photos: **Will Ireland**

Swap The Band winners enjoy their moment in the spotlight.

Fans have come from near and very far.

It's the third and final night of Marillion's sell-out weekend at Center Parcs in Port Zélande, a holiday resort near the southern Holland coastal town of Ouddorp. It's a glorious finale to what has been a remarkable few days, Marillion ending their final show by playing their 1999 album *marillion.com* in its entirety. The In Praise Of Folly string quartet, dressed as four eerie Miss Havershams, open the show, there are guest appearances by sax and trumpet players (Phil Todd and Neil Yates) and sometime Marillion lyricist John Helmer, and the audience could not be more in thrall.

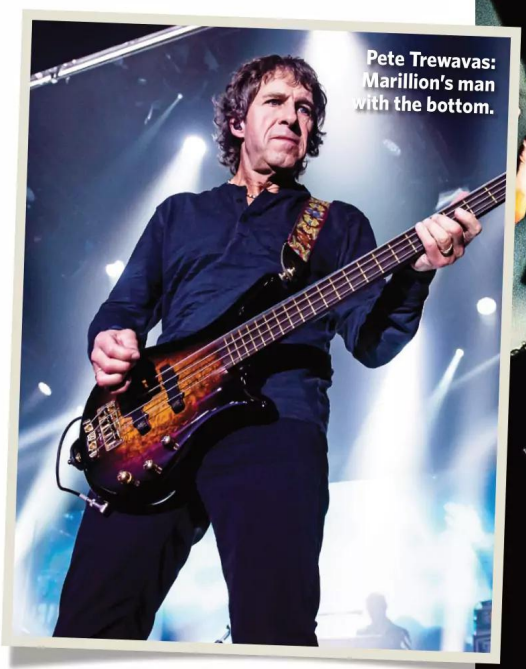
And then, during *Built-in Bastard Radar*, singer Steve Hogarth steps behind a rack of lights, stumbles through the video screen and disappears out of sight. He's fallen six feet into a lattice of scaffolding pipes, onto a concrete floor. Gamely, he sings a few bars, but then it's silence as an increasingly perplexed-looking band play on before stuttering to a halt. As the lights go up, the crew run toward the stage and try to fish him out. Hogarth, flat on his back, mic still in his hand, is badly winded but ever ebullient. Marillion's manager Lucy Jordache sticks her head through a gap next to the screen. Hogarth looks up at her.

"I can move my arms and legs", he says, managing a smile. Fifteen minutes later he's standing back on stage. "The nurses gave me tea, no one had morphine, sadly," he announces. "I don't think we're going to do that song again – it reminds me of a bad time in my life."

> *"We've been coming since 2007 to the weekends. I'm not a music obsessive, but Marillion have been the soundtrack to my life. Also, this one is special for us as it's the first time that my sons have come. They are loving it. Three days of living Marillion is like being in a Disneyworld for adults."*
>
> *Marcelo, Flavia, Antonio and Bernardo Scherer, Brazil*

Throughout this weekend in Port Zélande you hear the words 'soundtrack to my life' a lot. Surrounded by water, with a river running through its heart, it's strangely idyllic for a holiday camp. Ducks, swans and hens amble around the chalets. From the edge of the site you look out at the North Sea, a flat expanse of greys and blues with the sunshine glinting off its surface. The Marillion fans on the sandy beach seem surprised by this display of beauty. In the distance a row of small yachts tethered loosely to the boardwalk bob gently, their masts swaying in unison.

Take the path through the chalets that hug the cove and work inland and you come to the



Pete Trewavas: Marillion's man with the bottom.

Let there be light: the Marillion stage show in full effect.

on-site supermarket, bars, swimming pool and the giant marquee erected in the car park for the event. Almost every chalet window and door is open, from every doorway comes the sound of one Marillion track or another, and just about everyone is wearing a perfectly preserved Marillion T-shirt. Before the camp was refurbished this year there was even a TV channel you could tune in to that played only Marillion videos. As Steve Hogarth will later comment: "It's a mini-festival for the like-minded, so there's an atmosphere of international bonhomie which pervades everything and just makes me happy to be at the centre of it."

The Adventure Factory doubles as the event's second stage and a cavernous merchandise hall, and on Saturday hosts the achingly tough Marillion Quiz. From a distance, the giant white tent in which Marillion will play three shows looks like it has fallen out of the sky and landed there.

Lucy Jordache is seated on her personal golf buggy at the rear of the venue. Like the rest of band, she can be seen drifting through the park the entire weekend, although the band tend to favour the Parc's bicycles as their mode of transport. Steve Hogarth takes the criss-crossing paths at a leisurely pace, while keyboard player Mark Kelly looks like he could give Bradley Wiggins a run for his money. Kelly enjoys dismounting and mingling. "That's the highlight for me," he says, "wandering around the village and seeing all these people hanging around talking, saying hello, Marillion music playing everywhere. It's like some other dimension where Marillion is universally known and liked. I'm not sure I would like to live in such a universe, but it's great to visit for the weekend."

> 'As beguiling as the band-related ephemera is, it's the music Marillion make that's at the heart of these weekends.'

Two thousand six hundred fans show up for the Marillion weekend in Port Zélande, and all those tickets sold out within 12 hours of going on sale. This is the sixth time at this venue and the first time they've opened up the place on the Thursday night. They use that evening to welcome everyone with a Marillion-themed fancy dress party, competitors dressing up as the band's songs. There were more than a few jesters, but the winners came dressed as the song *White Paper*.

Caped crusader: fan-turned-Marillion worker Steph Bradley.

Lest we forget, Marillion – the band who were never meant to transcend their neo-prog roots with Fish on vocals, who reinvented themselves with album giveaways, commandeered the digital era, helped pioneer pledge campaigns, and became self-sufficient and a cottage industry that positively bloomed – are now the very essence of what it means to be a rock band in the modern age. Musically, too, they've matured and grown – it's arguable that there hasn't been a more considered and adroit album by a British band than *FEAR* in the last 12 months. Little wonder that they've made these kind of events their own.

The Marillion weekends began in 2002, at Pontins in the West Country, to which fans would fly in from the USA, Mexico, Venezuela… From there it moved a bit upmarket to Butlins, and then on to the continent and Center Parcs. Port Zélande 2019 is already booked. There are also weekend shows planned over the next few months in the UK, Poland and Chile, and they're sold out too.

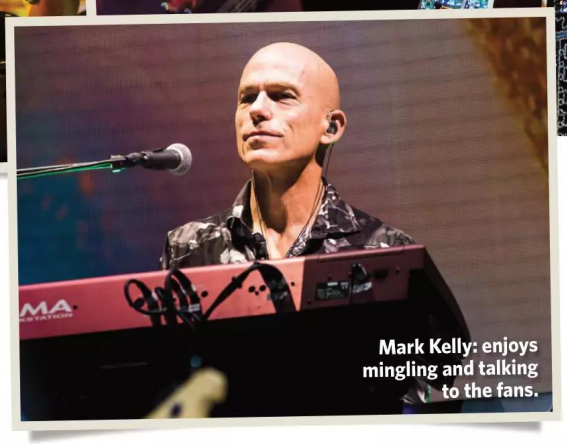
"I remember we did Butlins once and we had to share one weekend with a Country & Western convention," says Jordache. "There were all these people walking around in cowboy hats, and Marillion fans, and it just felt off. And the accommodation was not that good. So we knew we needed to go up. We did toy with the idea of a Center Parc in the UK, but it was so expensive. They suggested Europe to us, so H [Steve Hogarth] and I came on a field trip, and it was such a welcoming experience. It's got to the point now where the staff here have to put their names in a hat and enter a draw in order to work this weekend. They all want to be on shift for the conventions. It's amazing."

> *"I came into Frankfurt two weeks ago to get over the jet lag. It's gone beyond the band and the music. I think I've been a little bit in shock – it hasn't seemed real. The people make the experience."*
>
> *Lynwen Birch, Australia*

So if you can manage to get a ticket to a Port Zélande Marillion Weekend, what do you get for the basic £330 ticket? Some very decent accommodation (CR had its own sauna in the VIP chalet – you don't get that at the Reading Festival), three exclusive Marillion shows, a quiz, rock karaoke with a live band, prog disco, 80s rock disco, afternoon shows from the various support bands, merchandise hangar, signings, your chance to *play* with the band, photo opportunities and, perhaps most importantly, the band themselves. It's not unusual to be seated in the main square and have bassist Pete Trewavas idle by. They stop to chat, too – they mingle

Steve Rothery: fans find him touching – literally.

Panic Room were part of the weekend's supporting cast.



Mark Kelly: enjoys mingling and talking to the fans.

and ask how things are. You can even go running through the park's wooded trails and out to the coastal path with Mark Kelly. You can spot the first-timers: they're the ones with a stupefied look on their face when guitarist Steve Rothery places a hand on their arm and asks genially if they enjoyed the show. "We really do have the best fans in the world," Kelly says, "most of whom I'd be happy to go out for a beer with. They're very respectful."

As beguiling as the band-related ephemera is, as engrossing as the feeling of family and community is (case in point: once word had got out that a couple of people from *Classic Rock* were here, we couldn't turn around without people offering to buy us a drink and expressing their joy that the magazine and its sister title *Prog* were back on the shelves), it's the music Marillion make that's at the heart of these weekends.

"We've had moments doing these," says Trewavas, "where after one of the songs everyone just went crazy and applauded us and gave us a standing ovation – in the middle of the show, and it went on for what seemed like a very long time. I was dumbstruck. We just looked at each other and tried to soak up as much of the love being given back as possible."

With three shows, three completely different productions, three different sets, upwards of seven hours of Marillion music, it's little wonder that the band work so hard, and begin rehearsing months before.

Friday is a mixed bag of surprises revealed from behind blood-red theatre drapes, the video screens dancing into life as the band thrill with songs including *Gazpacho* and the mesmerising production utilised for the reflective *The Only Unforgiveable Thing*: a church interior melting away as Hogarth stands centre-stage looking as though he's burning up in the beams of white light. It's an arena-sized show for just under 3,000 people; to say it's overwhelming would be to understate things.

Sunday's *marillion.com* show is a revelatory thrill too, even with the enforced interval due to Hogarth's tumble, not least in the delicate version of *House* with just piano and muted trumpet drifting slowly up towards the high ceiling.

As astounding as Sunday might have been, however, it's the previous night's show that causes most of the audience to unravel. While it was something of an open secret that the band would perform their *FEAR* album in full for the first time, it's doubtful that anyone expected to hear *Clutching At Straws* in its entirety as the first half of the show. That it's followed by *Mylo* from *Misplaced Childhood* and a boisterous *Market Square Heroes* causes something akin to delirium in the audience. Almost every song is sung back at the band, and seeing one fan close by crying during *Sugar Mice* (he wasn't the only one) and the dancing during *Incommunicado* is like watching the tail end of a boisterous wedding.

The first half of the show is a glorious high that only the sublime, creeping *FEAR* could surpass. If the first half, with its pyros and belches of fire, is the 80s reimagined, then the second half, with its burnished golds and rusty browns, is the introspection of a generation staring into the abyss. People look punch-drunk at the end. As Marillion shows go, it's doubtful you'll see a better one.

More than just Marillion for one wedding-anniversary couple.

> *They're my favourite band, they've made the soundtrack of my life, you know? marillion.com was the first one I fell in love with. This is my fourth time here. I like the place, the people, you get that family vibe.*
>
> *Gergely Janko, Hungary*

Marillion's Lighting Designer, Yenz Nyholm, is sitting outside the back of the venue, sunning himself on a grass verge in a brief respite on this balmy Sunday afternoon. Dressed in a kilt, which he reckons is perfect dress for working in, he's the man who has spent the weekend startling the audience with washes of colour, explosions and flames. At one point he held Hogarth in an extraordinary cage of green lasers with hard yellow beams set at each corner. It takes him almost three months to program the lights for these shows.

All white on the night: support band Iamthemorning.

Groups of fans are never short of a photo opportunity.

"Working with this music, it's fun, it's theatrical, you can do so much with it, and they let you more or less get away with anything," he says. "The goal for Saturday was to capture that eighties vibe, so no video, but lots of explosions, dry ice, colours. And then you go into the *FEAR*, which is all about the videos, all about the lasers, the technology. The music helps, and it's changed so much. It's a completely different band. They were telling stories back then, but they were more of a rock band. It's fun trying to recreate their thoughts and lyrics."

In the Adventure Factory, the hard-as-hell Marillion Quiz is winding down (full disclosure: *CR* got one answer right). The winning team (deep breath), the Hot Hard Turds On A Big Fact Hunt, are, like most of the audience, from all corners of the globe. Their de facto spokesman, Nathan Page, is a fresh faced twenty-four-year-old from Nottingham. As winners they get their photo taken with the band tomorrow, a trophy and credits for the Marillion web store. At previous Weekends, the winning team used to take on the band in a quiz about Marillion. But as Steve Rothery recalls: "We never won, they always beat us."

"The first time I saw the band was here when I was thirteen," says Page. "My mum and stepdad had their honeymoon here and dragged me along and I was hooked. I'm pretty pleased with the win. There was a question about the backing singer from *Straws*

> 'People look punch-drunk at the end. As Marillion shows go, it's doubtful you'll see a better one.'

I didn't get. That was obscure. The picture round was particularly difficult. The one I was most pleased about getting was the question about *You Don't Need Anyone*. It was: which song did the band perform live but never released on an album?"

It's 3pm on Sunday afternoon, and not only is the main arena open, it's also packed out. The band are doing photos and conducting an on-stage Q&A with questions that have been sent to their website. It's goofy and charming, and the usually considered drummer Ian Mosley proves to have better comic timing than most stand-ups.

What's most remarkable is what follows when Marillion pick up their instruments for an event called Swap The Band. Fans send MP3s of themselves playing along to Marillion, and the band vet them and invite the best ones to play with them at the convention. Over the next half-hour, the chosen fans take turns to perform as one of Marillion, while the band member they've subbed for looks on. No pressure, then. We get *Incommunicado*, *Hooks In You*, *The Release*, *Sugar Mice*, and a striking version of *Power* with one Derek Kelly on drums, while Ian Mosley stands off to one side watching.

Moments later, Kelly is at the back of the venue, blinking into the sunshine. He looks completely dazed. "How was it?" He asks me. "Was I alright?" More than alright.

"Playing *Power* was an absolute, unbelievable feeling. I don't think I've ever experienced anything like it. I tried to look up, but I found it very hard to do that. I got the email about it a month ago. I was shocked, stunned, bricking it. I feel elated now. I really can't believe it. It was a real thrill, honestly."

Stephanie Bradley is sitting in the makeshift production office at the back of the Adventure Factory. She's the Marillion fan and former research scientist who now works for the band. In a blue cape, she also ran the prog disco on Friday night. Fans stop and chat to her on site almost as much as they do the band.

"I organise this weekend, Lucy oversees everything," she says. "But because this is residential, I take all the bookings for everyone who comes, payments, sort out who goes where, match people up in the cottages. A bit like a dating service, but not.

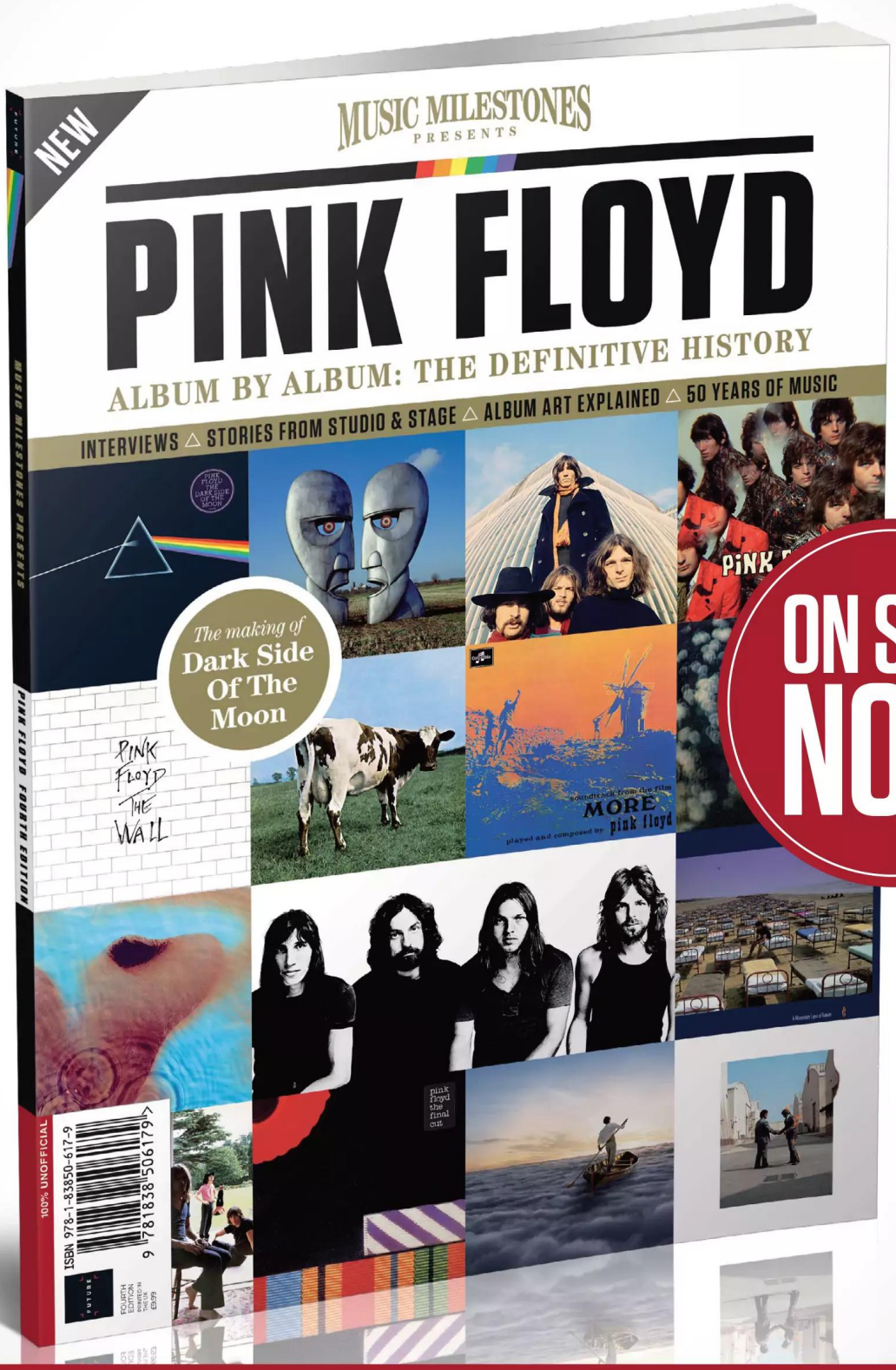
"The first one we did here, the check-in was the big issue for me, as I'd underestimated how long it would take to prepare all the welcome packs. I was still doing the envelopes at four am. before the check-in opened the next day. I had some cold bug, too. By the time I got home I'd ended up with pneumonia. It was a total success though."

It's the last moments of Sunday night, and the band have reprised a section of *FEAR*'s *The Leavers*. The venue is cloudy with confetti from the cannons that signal the end of the performance, and the weekend, as the lights come up on an audience reeling and still singing the song's '*We come together*' refrain.

Someone opens a door to the cold night outside, and a few heads swivel round but quickly turn back again. Everyone is trying to hold on to the moment that little bit longer. No one is leaving, or wants to leave just yet.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ONE OF MUSIC'S GREATEST BANDS

Go behind the scenes and discover how some of music's most iconic albums were made with this comprehensive guide to Pink Floyd. Packed with exclusive interviews and amazing images, this is a must for any music fan.



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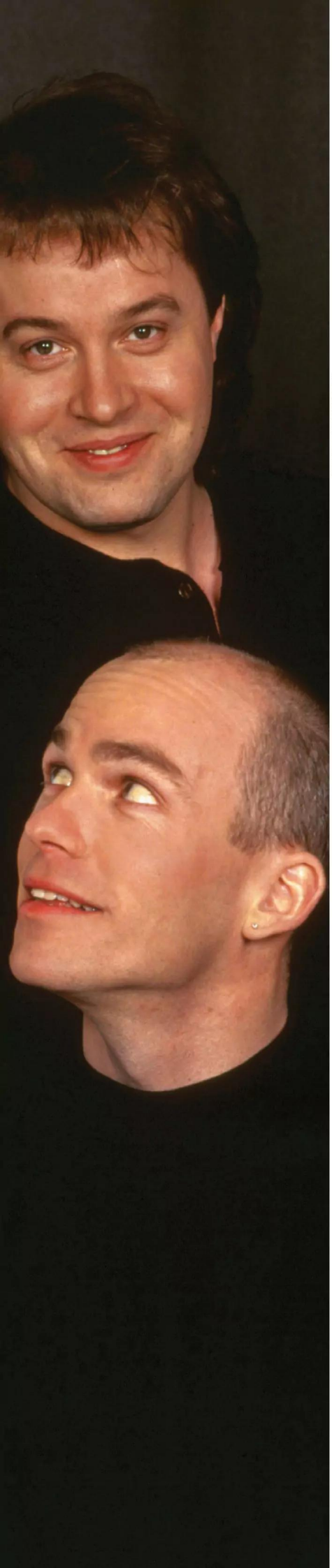


JILL FURMANOVSKY /PRESS

MIKE CAMERON/GETTY

The 50 Greatest Marillion Songs

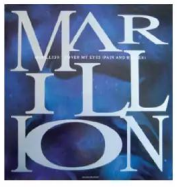
When we asked Marillion fans to vote for the band's finest track, the people spoke in their thousands. And this is what they had to say.

Words: Dave Everley, Dom Lawson, Rich Wilson, David West

50 THE KING OF SUNSET TOWN

Seasons End, 1989

Not just the opening track of the album that would usher in Marillion's second era, but the earliest fruits of their union with new boy Steve Hogarth, partly jammed out in Peter Trewavas' garage on their first meeting. Washes of sadness swirl under the euphoric melody – not surprising, since the lyrics were inspired by the Tiananmen Square massacre. **DE**



49 BRAVE

Brave, 1994

After their unsuccessful attempt to be more commercial with *Holidays In Eden*, the follow-up took Marillion into darker, more introspective territory. The album's title track is deeply melancholic and sparsely orchestrated, not a song to reach out and grab the

audience, but only rewarding listeners willing to dive into its swirling undercurrents. **DW**

48 MAN OF A THOUSAND FACES

This Strange Engine, 1997

A masterclass in the art of arranging a song, *Man Of A Thousand Faces* gives Peter Gabriel a run for his money in terms of rich, layered orchestration and production. The coda starts as a gentle trickle but grows until it reaches an ecstatic catharsis. **DW**

47 COVER MY EYES (PAIN AND HEAVEN)

Holidays In Eden, 1991

The well-honed commerciality of *Holidays In Eden*'s lead-off single – complete with U2-style opening riff – caused some initial consternation amongst the band's fanbase. But onstage, the upbeat, triumphant nature of the music and lyrics projected the song to a new level. **RW**

46 SPLINTERING HEART

Holidays In Eden, 1991

It may open Marillion's "poppiest" album, but the slow-burning *Splintering Heart*, possesses all the attributes that fans of the band adore. Moving through numerous distinctive segments, including tranquil moments that combine with some hefty guitar motifs, the music matches the lyrical topic of loneliness perfectly. **RW**

45 JIGSAW

Fugazi, 1984

Children's puzzles are just part of a barrage of imagery unleashed by Fish on this dissection of the self-destructive nature of romance, a subject the singer would mine time and time again throughout his time in Marillion. Stripping away the filigree of their older songs, *Jigsaw* swings from caress to knife-plunge in a heartbeat. **DE**

44 BITTER SUITE

Misplaced Childhood, 1985

The first of *Misplaced Childhood*'s twin epics begins with an ominous clatter of cymbals and swirl of keyboards and ends with a tantalising piano melody. The eight minutes in between take the listener on a journey from the bedsits and dank canals of Scotland to *"the outskirts of nowhere, on a ring road somewhere"*, via a French brothel. Truly grandiose in ambition and scope. **DE**

43 THE LEAVERS

FEAR, 2016

Titled *The Leavers* but mercifully having no relevance to Brexit, this track epitomises the passion of modern Marillion. Musically lush without unnecessary meandering, it exudes a deliberate and sumptuous beauty. The lyrics delve into the passing acquaintances made on tour and impact of the touring musician on "normal" family life. **RW**

42 WHEN I MEET GOD

Anoraknophobia (2001)

A natural highlight of the stylistically displaced *Anoraknophobia* album, the track blends a contemporary Marillion sound with some of Steve Hogarth's most astute lyrics. Bemoaning the frequent tragedies that strike the world and the apparent lack of intervention from God, the song is as wistful as it is thought provoking. **RW**

41 THAT TIME OF THE NIGHT (THE SHORT STRAW)

Clutching At Straws, 1987

Fish's own long, dark night of the soul: the most nocturnal moment on an album that's enveloped in alcoholic darkness and cocaine paranoia. The singer wrote it in the small hours after one too many bust-ups in the studio while making *Clutching At Straws*, intending it to be his resignation letter – and sounds like it. **DE**

40 KING

Afraid Of Sunlight, 1995

What happens to someone when they no longer recognise the person they've become? That's the question posed by *King*, another Hogarth dissection of the perils of celebrity, addressed to a star hailed as a genius but one whose creative fires have sputtered out under the incessant pressure to become commodified. **DW**

39 HE KNOWS YOU KNOW

Script For A Jester's Tear, 1983

Prog rock rarely tackled such real-life issues as drug addiction, but Marillion's entry into that small cannon sweats clammy anxiety and brain-fried tension. Bonus points for the *"Don't give me your problems"* pay-off, yelled down an old-school phone receiver. **DE**

38 THE WEB

Script For A Jester's Tear, 1983

Taking the forlorn lyrical themes of *Script*... to their conclusion, *The Web* was crammed with rampant melancholia and Fish's heartfelt, semi-autobiographical thoughts. Live, *The Web* will always be remembered for the Fish's manic, dramatic demolition of that ever-present in any bed-sit or student flat – the rubber plant. **RW**

37 THE NEW KINGS

FEAR, 2016

One of the more euphoric songs on Marillion's defiant and inspired 2016 album, *The New Kings* delves into the weighty topic of money compromising democracy, as well as Hogarth's mourning for the England of his childhood. Accompanied by suitably sumptuous keyboards and Steve Rothery's poignant guitar, it

Heads up: Marillion meet the world's tallest photographer.

PRESS

33 THE SKY ABOVE THE RAIN

Sounds That Can't Be Made, 2012

A tale of fading love and passion in a marriage, this emotional song had the potential to become oppressive but for the optimism of the final verses. The symphonic music that the band created to suit the story also remains one of their most heart wrenching. **RW**

32 CHILDHOOD'S END

Misplaced Childhood, 1985

A sunburst of self-realisation that leads *Misplaced Childhood* into its final furlong, tying up all the musical and lyrical strands that had come before it. After everything that had come before, it seemed like hope might just win the day: "I can do anything, I'm still a child." **DE**

31 GAZA

Sounds That Can't Be Made, 2012

Hogarth was moved to pen *STCBM*'s opening track by the experiences of Palestinian refugees, and it ranks as one of prog's most powerful pieces of writing. The character in the song talks about his brother becoming a martyr, a moment showing that progressive rock can be political, humanist, and still devastatingly potent. **DW**

30 CINDERELLA SEARCH

Assassing B-side, 1984

This beloved B-side finds Fish on typically poetic form, telling the melancholy tale of a drunkard looking for love in an alcoholic haze. The mid-section has a driving new wave/disco beat from Ian Mosley and the song appeared in Marillion's mid-80s live sets, reappearing on the *Real To Reel* live album. **DW**

29 BLIND CURVE

Misplaced Childhood, 1985

Five stellar movements in one breathtaking nine-and-a-half minute suite, *Blind Curve* is the beating heart of *Misplaced Childhood*. The *Perimeter Walk* section pulses with menace, though its *Threshold*, with its desperate images of war widows in launderettes and *'convoys kerb-crawling West German autobahns'*, that packs the emotional wallop. **DE**

28 MARKET SQUARE HEROES

Market Square Heroes EP, 1982

The glorious opening salvo: a wired call-to-arms that instantly positioned

demonstrated the band's unflagging brilliance and relevance. **RW**

36 INCOMMUNICADO

Clutching At Straws, 1987

The lead single from *Clutching At Straws* temporarily lifted some of the darkness. Influenced by some of The Who's rockier moments, it's an energetic romp and a barely concealed reference to getting pissed. The keyboard parts are probably some of Mark Kelly's finest moments, and the promo video matched the levity of that *Garden Party*. **RW**

35 NO ONE CAN

Holidays In Eden, 1991

Taken from an album that's often dismissed because of the radio-friendly direction, the tender *No One Can* retains integrity despite the soft focus chorus. Released as a single, it didn't deliver the pocketful of cash their then label wanted but the optimistic lyrics and sublime guitar solo endeared it to the fanbase. **RW**

34 WHITE RUSSIAN

Clutching At Straws, 1987

Fish looks up from his half empty glass to survey the world around him on *Clutching At Straws*' brooding centrepiece — and he doesn't like what he sees. Inspired by the election of ex-Nazi Kurt Waldheim as Austrian President, it knits together Europe's bloody past and bleak present with a prescience that echoes today. **DE**

Marillion at the forefront of a new generation of progressive bands. They wrote more refined songs, but few had its martial spirit. **DE**

27 SLÁINTE MHATH

Clutching At Straws, 1987

Dylan Thomas meets Robert Burns in a pub lock-in. Named for a Celtic drinking toast, this offers a glasses aloft rebuke to the outside world, as *'princes in exile'* hold court at the bar and would-be poets scribble lines on beer mats. If any songs stands as a farewell to the Fish era, it's this. **DE**

26 HEART OF LOTHIAN

Misplaced Childhood, 1985

The lyric is Fish's, but the song belongs to Steve Rothery, whose spiralling guitar equalled that of his heroes David Gilmour and Steve Hackett. Edited down as a single, the ecstatic full-length album version is the only one that counts. **DE**

25 ESTONIA

This Strange Engine, 1997

For a song inspired by the sinking of a ferry, in which hundreds perished, *Estonia* manages to find light in the darkness. The verses are suitably downbeat, but the song surges up in the choruses with Hogarth declaring, *'No one leaves you when you live in their heart and mind.'* **DW**

24 CHELSEA MONDAY

Script For A Jester's Tear, 1983

Inspired by a half-glimpsed newspaper headline, this tale of a lonely, doomed woman trying and failing to make it in the big city is simultaneously bleak and sympathetic. Proof that where their forebears constructed flights of fantasy, Marillion found their gold in the mundane. **DE**

23 BEAUTIFUL

Afraid Of Sunlight, 1995

A plea for greater kindness in a world that doesn't value either fragility or vulnerability. Hogarth's heartfelt message is delivered with a lush melody and rich orchestration. It's the sort of big, rousing ballad that would be a huge hit for any pop singer or diva beloved by Radio 2. **DW**

22 OUT OF THIS WORLD

Afraid Of Sunlight, 1995

Written about the emotions surrounding the death of Donald Campbell, who died during a speed record attempt on Coniston Water, this track inspired divers to locate his body in 2001. Handling such a subject matter with lyrical dignity and suitably sweeping melodies, Steve Hogarth would later perform the song at Campbell's funeral. **RW**

Fish: "I'm a little teapot..."

NIELS VAN IPEREN/GETTY IMAGES

21 GARDEN PARTY

Script For A Jester's Tear, 1983

Written as a mocking retort to some of the characters Fish encountered when visiting a girlfriend at Cambridge University, this was the single which would create a discernible buzz around the band. The keyboards and guitars trade old school progressive blows, culminating in an uplifting finale. **RW**

20 ASSASSING

Fugazi, 1982

Fish's wordy wordplay might be too clever for its own good (apparently it was inspired by the firing of original drummer Mick Pointer), but there's no arguing with the viciousness of *Fugazi*'s opening track. *'What do you call assassins who accuse assassins anyway?'* Who knows? **DE**

19 INCUBUS

Fugazi 1984

One of Fish's favourite tracks, *Incubus* is a voyeuristic story of misplaced, bedroom Polaroid photographs. At times borderline seedy, the intensity of the narrative is equalled by the inspired musical backdrop. Whether the explosive introduction, the almost funereal middle section or euphoric conclusion, it's a highlight from an often-overlooked album. **RW**

18 THE SPACE

Seasons End, 1989

Partly recycled from an unreleased song by Steve Hogarth's old band How We Live titled *Wrapped In The Flag* and inspired by a tram accident the singer witnessed in Amsterdam, *The Space*

finds Hogarth musing on the damage he'd caused and been caused throughout his life. The *'everybody in the whole of the world'* coda ends both the song and their first album together on a suitable billowing note. **DE**

17 LAVENDER

Misplaced Childhood, 1985

The old folk song *Lavender Blue* gets reimagined as a grown-up love song, replacing the heartbreak and yearning of *Kayleigh* with innocence and hope. A gentle melody gives way to a chorus that crashes in like a tidal wave, proving that Marillion could go for the heart as well as the head. **DE**

16 SEASONS END

Seasons End, 1989

Marillion had never sounded so Floydian than on the title track to Steve Hogarth's debut album with them, though the lyrics were something else: eight minutes of apocalyptic beauty that envision an earth ruined by climate change long before that became a hot button topic. Sad to say it's more relevant today than ever. **DE**

15 FANTASTIC PLACE

Marbles 2004

Surprisingly, members of the band were unconvinced that this tender song deserved a place on *Marbles* until they were persuaded otherwise by their producer. The most blatant song about escapism on the album, it's spiritually uplifting both musically and lyrically, sending out the message that no matter what the surroundings, escape is always enticingly feasible. **RW**

14 WARM WET CIRCLES

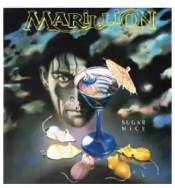
Clutching At Straws, 1987

Near cinematic vignettes of life, love and loss in small-town Britain, all bathed in the romance of the Barron optics and lifted on high by Steve Rothery, whose guitar seems to circle ever higher. Mark Kelly, for one, complained that the wordy title ruined the chances of major chart success, but it remains a highlight of the Fish years. **DE**

13 AFRAID OF SUNLIGHT

Afraid Of Sunlight, 1995

The title track of Marillion's last major label outing finds Steve Hogarth turning his incisive gaze on the price of fame. In addition to a standout performance from the vocalist, as the track builds to a crescendo Steve Rothery lets loose with a guitar solo that matches the frontman's impassioned delivery. **DW**



12 FORGOTTEN SONS

Script For A Jester's Tear, 1983

Anyone doubting Marillion's political edge need only listen to the track that closes *Script For A Jester's Tear*. Switching between armoured car-like power and ghostly ambience, this decried the senseless violence and hopeless loss that defined The Troubles in Northern Ireland. **DE**

11 FUGAZI

Fugazi, 1984

Named after slang used by US troops in Vietnam for "all fucked up", their second album's title track was a great leap forward from their debut. Shifting pace and direction throughout, it captures Fish in full poet-warrior mode, laying bare the tensions of modern life in intricate style. **RW**

10 OCEAN CLOUD

Marbles, 2004

Marillion have consistently been able to produce cinematic, enthralling music — something that was exemplified on *Ocean Cloud*. Another sumptuous song from the potent *Marbles* album, it was inspired by the feats of endurance achieved by yachtsman Tony Bullimore and Atlantic rower Don Allen. It was also thematically linked to the album's recurring lyrical undercurrent of escapism and a desire to prove society wrong. Indeed, it also references Hogarth's real life run in with a games teacher who publicly dismissed him as a "cream puff" and his desire the prove the accuser wrong. Enhanced by the use of news reports and some of Allen's diary entries, the song is moving, especially given that the rower died months after his achievement due to the injuries he sustained. Musically, the track is simply immense. Lilting keyboards accompany calmer elements of the tale, with a chaotic, clattering backdrop providing a dramatic focus for the more perilous moments of their nautical journeys. **RW**

9 SUGAR MICE

Clutching At Straws, 1987

Inspired by the very *'hotel in Milwaukee in the rain'* mentioned in the lyrics, right down the phone call Fish made to his then-wife, it the gentle *Sugar Mice* drills down into exactly the same kind of existential loneliness and sense of impermanence beautifully captured in the movie *Lost In Translation* around a decade and a half later. **DE**

8 EASTER

Seasons End, 1989

When Steve Hogarth became the new Marillion vocalist in 1988, opinion among the band's huge fanbase seemed equally divided between those who instantly warmed to him and those who simply couldn't accept that Fish was no longer at the helm. The key to winning over the doubters came with songs like *Easter*, an emotionally overpowering look at The Troubles in Northern Ireland that boasts a melody so incisive and stirring that many Fish-ites found it impossible to resist. **DL**

7 GRENDEL

Market Square Heroes EP, 1982

You can hear the groans of Marillion themselves at the fact this has placed so high. The grandstanding 17-minute track that squatted like a swamp beast on the B-side of 1982's *Market Square Heroes* EP is a callow attempt to write an instant epic that's bold, ambitious and, if you're a member of the band themselves, plain embarrassing. Fish borrowed heavily from John Gardner's novel *Grendel*, though not as heavily as the song itself borrowed from Genesis' *Supper's Ready* — one fragment is a ringer for the latter's *Apocalypse In 9/8* section. But for all that, its puppyish enthusiasm and bulletproof chutzpah is impossible not to love. **DE**

6 THE GREAT ESCAPE

Brave, 1994

Brave didn't make for easy listening. Recanting the life of a would-be suicide victim found wandering on the Severn Bridge, the album investigated a gloomy world of abuse and drug taking. The accompanying film of the same name only amplified the mental images into something starkly tangible. *The Great Escape* provides a narrative of the girl's inner turmoil as she heads toward the bridge and an uncertain future. Despite such bleakness, the song is archetypal Marillion, replete with chiming keyboards, perfectly weighted bass and drums, and another one of Steve Rothery career-defining guitar solos. Vocally, Hogarth also manages to capture the mental torment of the main character, delivering the lines with an empathy and vitality that few singers can achieve. Aside from being an album highlight, live performances are embellished with an unnerving edginess, before the album's final track *Made Again* provides some much needed optimism. **RW**

5 THE INVISIBLE MAN

Marbles, 2004

Unquestionably one of the band's finer tracks, *The Invisible Man* is another high point on one of their most alluring albums of the last 20 years. Extending

Fish: the master of lonely bedsit poetry.

PETE CRONIN/GETTY

to almost 15 minutes, Marillion manage to achieve a seamless consistency between the numerous key and melody changes, without it sounding like a hastily stapled together blueprint. Identifiable as Marillion, but with modern flourishes – the opening segment even triggers memories of Portishead – the music has a pure poignancy which is a fitting match for Hogarth's heartfelt vocals.

Referencing the singer's sensation that, as a middle-aged man, he was becoming dislocated from modern culture and that the world had not changed for the better, it's a wise observation on that ongoing, generational disconnect. Performed live, the notion is given a striking visual support with Hogarth hobbling on stage supported by a walking cane, with the band giving the music an urgency and flair that has made this a beloved onstage favourite. **RW**

4 SCRIPT FOR A JESTER'S TEAR

Script For A Jester's Tear, 1983

The title track of the band's debut album introduced the now familiar figure of the Jester who would, in some form or another, appear either visually or lyrically on all of the Fish-era releases. Ascending through moments of mellow brooding, through to the exuberant finale, it's a lavish track with another inspired Rothery solo. The lyrics hint at passionate, lonely bedsit poetry and would find accord with many of prog rock's more cerebrally minded listeners. **RW**

RIGHT: PRESS

3 KAYLEIGH

Misplaced Childhood, 1985

The song that changed everything for the band, *Kayleigh* was written about Fish's ex-girlfriend and soon became the sound of the summer in 1985. The perfect pop song, with heartfelt lyrics, catchy chorus and idiosyncratic Steve Rothery solo, it peaked at number two in the singles chart and led to appearances on *Top Of The Pops* and *Wogan* – unthinkable even two years before. It may be the millstone around the band's neck (to this day, the gold single awarded to the band is displayed on the toilet wall in their recording studio), but it made them household names. **RW**

2 THIS STRANGE ENGINE

This Strange Engine, 1997

Recorded during the band's indie label phase, the album was a slightly awkward stylistic mix that, although engaging, left the recording lacking direction and sounding rather incomplete. However, the 15-minute title track remains one of the band's most captivating recordings. Marillion always deliver when there's a distinct lyrical concept to wrap their musical elegance around, and crucially, where there is the space and time to perfect it. Here, Hogarth endearingly recounts an autobiographical story of his childhood, wistfully recalling nautical tales told to him by his sailor father and an acknowledgement of the familial sacrifices such a nomadic existence entailed.

Given the sprawling subject matter, musically the band created an inventive and suitable accompaniment for each lyrical segment. Opening softly, the interplay between guitar and keyboards subtly develop the melodies, before hitting a wonderful crescendo. Hogarth's traumatic childhood attack by a swarm of bees even leads into a lovingly executed and unexpected saxophone solo. The solos performed by Rothery and Kelly are some of their most recognisable and, for many, haven't been surpassed. It's also become a much adored live centrepiece, with Hogarth playing his cricket bat converted keyboard, that adds entertainment to the drama. It's rare for a 15-minute track to be so enthralling. **RW**

1 NEVERLAND

Marbles, 2004

Opening with mournful keyboard parts, *Neverland* gradually develops into a classic Marillion track. It's expansive, soulful and endearing, with no unbecoming musical diversions for which the band had occasionally been guilty of during the late 90s and early 2000s.

The 12 minutes are a showcase for the core Marillion traits. Mark Kelly's keyboards provide the flawless backdrop on to which the rhythm pairing of drummer Ian Mosley and bassist Pete Trewavas, meticulously set the tone. Crucially, there's enough space in this marathon for Steve Rothery to add lavish solos, which embellish the track with a certain opulence. It's the wisely constructed sound of a band in perfect balance, warmly encompassing their legacy, and adding 21st century contemporary polish. Indeed, the track is one of the peaks on an album that re-embraced the grandeur of their past, without scrambling to add stylistically incongruous, modern twists to try and become vaguely (or potentially, tragically) hip.

The gorgeous musical milieu does however only represent part of this song's bewitching appeal. Steve Hogarth's emotionally wrought vocals and captivating, hugely personal lyrics perfectly match and adorn the tenderness of the music. Divided into two distinct segments, the first deals with Hogarth's acknowledgement of the uplifting power of love, with the singer also struggling to accept and handle his perceived inner flaws. As often is the case on this powerful album, the lyrics then delve into the desire to escape and are inspired by JM Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Although suitably disguised, the references to Wendy, the ticktock of the crocodile, and Captain Hook add a slightly surreal element to the core lyrical motive. The track has subsequently become a live staple due to the impeccable blend of what's always made Marillion great – unabashed progressive rock, coupled with cerebral lyrics that encourage thought and emotional commitment. **RW**

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